COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 109
January 2004

$6.95 U.S./$10.45 Can.
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING

Neal Adams
BATMAN
Interview Pt. II

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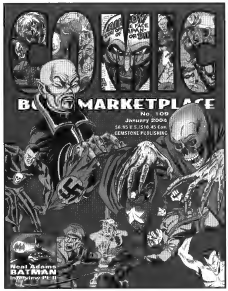

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"Bring On the Bad Guys..."

What's a hero without a good villain? The best measure of a hero and his lasting durability has to be the foil he matches wits with. Sherlock Holmes vs. Professor Moriarty, Flash Gordon vs. Ming The Merciless, and James Bond vs. Ernst Blofeld, all fondly remembered battles between good and evil. The same is true with comics, particularly in the Golden Age. This issue of *CBM* is dedicated to the characters we love to hate.

Ron Goulart examines the beginnings of comics' most nefarious evil-doers in "Eminent Villains of The Golden Age." They're the staple by which all comic villains will be compared, Luthor, The Joker, Dr. Sivana, and The Red Skull.

The Silver Age represented the revival of the comic book superhero and it brought about a whole new crop of villains. Some of the best came from the creative mind of legendary artist Carmine Infantino, who is interviewed in this issue by Bill Baker. Infantino gave birth to The Flash's Rogues Gallery and the alluring, but dangerous Poison Ivy, among others.

Will Murray gives us a new appreciation of MLJ's long neglected super villain The Skull, arch nemesis of The Black Hood. Will sheds some light on his possible roots and his appearances in *Top Notch Comics*.

In the Bronze Age many previously forgotten and neglected villains were revived, most notably in the pages of *Batman*. So, who better to speak about this than Neal Adams? In the concluding part of my interview with Neal, he discusses reviving Two-Face from a near twenty-year slumber and The Joker's return to his homicidal roots. We also examine two of his own villainous creations, Manbat and Ra's Al Ghul.

It's a jam-packed issue, full of blackguards, mad scientists, world dominators and murderers. In fact, we've had so much fun examining their dastardly deeds that in *CBM* #111 we're going to do it again, this time concentrating on the Silver Age.

Michael Kronenberg
Art Director/Cover Designer

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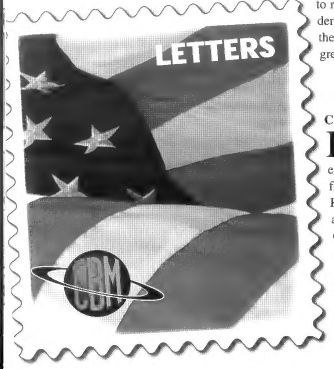
Pacific memories

This was a great issue [#105], especially the article on Bruce Jones. For me, Pacific Comics was like the second coming of EC. They not only brought in the established mainstream star artists of the day but superstars such as Corben, Holmes, Jones (Jeff) and Conrad, etc., who at most did little if any work for the big two. Where EC (and I am guessing Feldstein and Gaines) tailored their stories to the artist's strengths, still they were locked (for the most part) into the 6-, 7- or 8-page story structure. Pacific could reprint, re-color, or allocate X number of pages to any project, all printed on the best paper comics had seen to date. True, Pacific could not publish dozens of books with Wally Wood art or Reed Crandall art, still they greatly expanded the menu and the creator base and the possibilities seemed endless.

Bruce Jones was someone I was not familiar with prior to Pacific, yet to bring so many talents together you know there had to be a lot of respect and trust from the community. I also don't agree about what Bruce said about his art, he is a master artist as well as an exceptional writer. Pacific really shook up the equation and they were one-stop shopping for anyone who wanted to sample exceptional work without doing the legwork. It's been almost 20 years (if my memory is still holding up) since Pacific gave up the fight, and now I read about Bruce Jones working on the Hulk and I feel bad. To me that was akin to Al Williamson inking Daredevil. You know what they do will be fantastic but you want and expect so much more. I would love to see someone bankroll a new comics company (let's call it Pacific 2) and ask Bruce to chart the course, the time is right as adults seem to make up the comic-buying demographic and they have the money. Thanks for a great article.

Mike Egan
via e-mail



Caniff again

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed article [right] from the University of Rhode Island (my doctoral alma mater) newsletter for *CBM*. Caniff is everywhere! I wonder what the other two of the "only three portraits" mentioned are?

Chris Boyko
New York NY

Cramer Family Donates Portrait to ROTC Battalion

The University of Rhode Island Reserved Officers Training Corps Cramer's Saber Battalion now has a face to put with its namesake. The battalion is named after 1st Lt. **Parker Dresser Cramer '59,** a graduate of the program and member of Sigma Chi fraternity who was killed during an ambush in Ben Cat, Vietnam in 1963.

A reproduction of a portrait of Cramer painted by famed cartoonist Milton Caniff, creator of such popular comic strips as "Terry and the Pirates" and "Steve Canyon," now hangs in the ROTC conference room in Keaney Gymnasium.

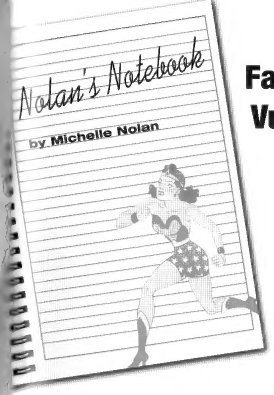
Caniff, who died in 1988, painted Cramer in his Army uniform with a map of Vietnam and its surrounding countries behind him. It is believed to be one of only three portraits Caniff painted.

When Caniff, a member of Sigma Chi at Ohio State, learned of Cramer's death, he wanted to paint his portrait. In 1965, Caniff visited the Kingston Campus and presented the portrait to the University's Sigma Chi chapter. The painting was later presented to Cramer's parents and hung in their home until their deaths.

Nancy Cramer Wilson '72, one of Cramer's four sisters and the owner of the original, presented the reproduction to URI's ROTC program in May 2003.

Patricia Cramer Schlick gave a personalized picture of her brother in a pamphlet written for the presentation: "Parker was many things besides being a soldier. He was funny, he had a self-deprecating humor…He could be weird. He liked to eat peanut butter and mayonnaise sandwiches, and if it would make his sisters gag he was not above adding ketchup or mustard to those concoctions.

"He was thoughtful in the sense of thinking beneath the surface about issues. You know that he was a ROTC graduate of the University of Rhode Island and you probably know he was a Sigma Chi. Did you know he worked in the library and spent many hours conversing with the head librarian there about literature, philosophy and history? One of the kindest letters we received after his death came from that librarian who told us of his love for Parker's intellect."—*Jan Sawyer '87*



Fawcett's One-Shot Villains: Vultura and Anarcho

Two of the most seldom-seen comic books to appear from Fawcett Publications during the Golden Age are also among the most unusual from any company to feature villains.

Jungle Girl #1 from 1942, starring Nyoka the Jungle Girl, and *Comics Novel* #1 from 1947, featuring Radar the International Policeman, are not only scarce but also feature novel-length epics of the only comic book appearances of two classic albeit incredibly corny villains, Vultura and Anarcho.

They also tie into today's headlines, since Vultura leads renegade bands of Arabs and Anarcho tries to keep fascism alive.

Both comics were, in effect, one-shots. *Jungle Girl* did evolve into *Nyoka* #2 (Winter 1945-46), but it took three years. *Comics Novel* apparently was intended to be a series, but the title never appeared again.

Fawcett was one of the most stable and financially successful of all Golden Age publishers—the company enjoyed an empire of magazines and paperbacks—so one-shot comics were not common from the giant firm. The company's many successful titles were noted for long runs, and *Nyoka* herself ran through #77 (Jun 1953), as well as in *Master Comics* #50-132 from 1944-53. Nyoka, whose modest attire always seemed suited for a summer barbeque or a car wash, was clearly the No. 2 comic book jungle queen behind Fiction House's far more flamboyant Sheena.

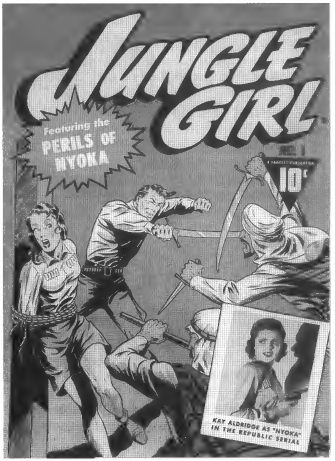
There were a few other Fawcett one-shots—the squarebound giant *All-Hero Comics* in 1943 and the 36-page *Crime Smasher* from 1948 come to mind—but not many. Likewise, Fawcett usually brought back its best villains again and again.

Such was not to be the case with Vultura and Anarcho, both of whom suffered definitive death at the end of each book-length tale. Vultura was inadvertently speared by her pet ape, Satan, and Anarcho was flipped into a pit of "lime acid" by Radar. Would that the world could be rid of certain current baddies in such a handy fashion!

Jungle Girl, the first comic book adaptation of a serial, was published in October 1942 according to the Gerber *Photo-Journal*, in conjunction with the classic 15-chapter serial on which it was based, *Perils of Nyoka*. The chapter play was one of the finest ever to come from Republic, which made most of the great cliff-hangers.

The heroine in both the Fawcett comic and the Republic serial was known as Nyoka Gordon, but the Nyoka name first appeared on the screen in the 1941 Republic serial *Jungle Girl*, starring Frances Gifford. The serial, which featured a heroine in the title role for the first time since the days of silent films, was widely publicized as based on the 1932 novel *Jungle Girl* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. The heroine was known as Nyoka Meredith in the 1941 serial but had her name changed to Nyoka Gordon for *Perils of Nyoka*.

A sentimental digression: I remember being especially fascinated when I first saw the *Jungle Girl* serial in the early 1990s because my father, who grew up in the Long Beach area, dated Frances Gifford when they attended Long Beach's Wilson High School in the mid-1930s. I recall feeling especially sad because by the time I obtained a copy of



Jungle Girl #1 (1942).

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the serial, my father had passed away. Gifford appeared in mostly supporting roles in more than two dozen movies—*Jungle Girl* was her only serial—before her career was curtailed, in large part because of serious head injuries sustained in an auto accident in 1948.

Gifford's *Jungle Girl* serial is listed as having been re-released under the same title in 1947, but the chapter play was shelved for many years in agreement with the estate of Edgar Rice Burroughs, who died in 1950.

Jungle Girl is an entertaining, skillfully produced chapter play, yet never has been nearly as well known as *Perils of Nyoka*, which was re-released in 1952 as *Nyoka and the Tigerman*, also the title under which Republic released the 15-chapter serial on video. *Perils of Nyoka* was edited into a 100-minute television feature in 1966 entitled *Nyoka and the Lost Secrets of Hippocrates*. That's how I first was introduced to Vultura, well before I even knew the *Jungle Girl* comic book existed.

Fawcett's *Jungle Girl* one-shot comic featured an inset cover photo of Kay Aldridge, who effectively played Nyoka in *Perils of Nyoka*. The unforgettable Clayton Moore played Nyoka's heroic sidekick, Larry Grayson, in typical bravura style. Moore successfully portrayed both heroes and villains in several Republic serials but soon went on to far greater fame as the Lone Ranger.

Many of the best scenes in *Perils of Nyoka*, however, were thoroughly stolen by statuesque Lorna Gray as the exotic and well-spoken Vultura, who issued some of the most bone-chilling commands in serial history. Gray, who appeared in nearly 50 films from 1938-51 and became known as Adrian Booth in 1946, turned in one of the most memorable roles in serial history as Vultura. In retrospect, that wasn't surprising, since she was one of the best actresses ever to grace a serial. She later appeared as spunky heroines in *Captain America* (1944) and *Daughter of Don Q* (1946) and as a slinky villainess in *Federal Operator 99* (1945).

Vultura, one of the first female villains in comic book history, bedeviled Nyoka in a highly unusual 51-page story, divided into six "cliff-hanger" chapters. This was unique for the comics of the time, which almost always featured several tales, whether they featured the same character or different heroes. In those days, it was rare for a single story to run more than 12 to 15 pages.

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Master Comics #50 (May 1944) reintroduced Nyoka.

Fawcett's *Jungle Girl* one-shot had no definite references to the serial except for this blurb below the inset cover photo: "Kay Aldridge as Nyoka in the Republic serial." Fawcett did much better by the films it portrayed in *Motion Picture Comics* and *Fawcett Movie Comics* in 1949-52, though none of these 35 issues featured serials.

One can only wonder if Fawcett originally intended to produce a comic book of the 1941 *Jungle Girl* serial, since the huge cover title *Jungle Girl* for the 1942 comic book serial adaptation was actually inappropriate. The small cover blurb below the huge title was "Featuring the Perils of Nyoka," as though it was added to take advantage of the serial title.

In fact, both the 1942 Nyoka serial and comic book had nothing to do with a jungle. The Kay Aldridge version of Nyoka fought Vultura and her Arab henchmen entirely in a desert environment. On the splash page, there are only two vague references to the serial: "See this famous movie heroine battle on the burning sands for untold wealth!" and "Flashing out of the movies…into her own comics magazine!"

The alliterative titles of the six comic book chapters, though, sound exactly like those of a serial: "Doom in the Desert," "Valley of Sacrifice," "Vultura's Vengeance," "Treasure of Terror," "The Finger of Fate" and "Climax of Conquest." Chances are, though, that the creators of the comic book may not have seen much, if anything, except the script for the serial, which was copyrighted June 27, 1942. I

have been told that serials were not shown before their initial copyright dates.

Fawcett portrayed Vultura in a surprisingly modest, calf-length shapeless red dress throughtout, even though Gray was outfitted more revealingly and exotically in the serial. This was definitely not Fiction House! In fact, the violence in the comic is also much less graphic than the chapter play, but that was typical of Fawcett's relatively bloodless style. Fawcett comics, at least until the horror comics era of the early 1950s, were generally much cleaner than many others of the period. It's no wonder that the first page lists an editorial advisory board consisting of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (identified only as President of the Girl Scouts Council of Greater New York), Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe and The Rev. John W. Tynan.

At the end of the story, the editors ask for postcards from readers who want to see more of Nyoka. Well over a year later, they answered the readers this way on the splash page of Nyoka's return—in her eight-page story in *Master Comix* #50 (May 1944):

"When the comics magazine *Jungle Girl, Featuring the Perils of Nyoka* was published, thousands of readers wrote to the editors asking for—yes, demanding—more stories about this bold, brave, beautiful heroine. Unfortunately, a limited paper supply makes it impossible for us to bring out a complete magazine of her adventures at this time, but we're doing the next best thing in presenting Nyoka as a regular new feature of *Master Comics*. Her old fans will be thrilled—her new fans will be dazzled!"

The Fawcett folks apparently weren't kidding—the company dropped from 113 issues in 1943 to 88 in 1944, not to mention cutting the page counts from 68 to 52, the way most publishers did. The drop continued—there were only 77 total Fawcett issues in 1945 before the company more than doubled their count to 161 issues in 1946.

Nyoka didn't appear until the fourth page of the story. By that time, Larry Grayson already has fought an Arab outlaw who greets him with a shout, "By Allah! I'll kill you, infidel pig!" But, as a cutline next exclaims, "The Arab desert-rat is no match for Larry's swordsmanship!" Needless to say, the youngsters who read this story were not left with an especially high opinion of Arab outlaws.

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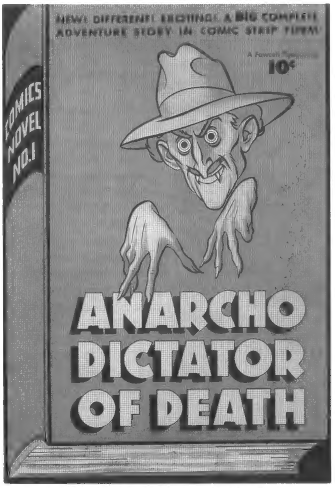
The dialog in *Jungle Girl* was primitive at best, as though the comic definitely was written primarily for 8-to-10 year olds.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COMICS NOVEL NO.1
ANARCHO DICTATOR OF DEATH

Comics Novel #1 (1947), better known as **Anarcho Dictator of Death.**

The verbiage was much more complex five years later in *Comics Novel* #1, now better known as *Anarcho, Dictator of Death*—the title emblazoned on the cover. That bold, orange (red?) cover is one of the oddest in Fawcett history, featuring the green visage of Anarcho's horror-film face and ghost-like hands. What makes this comic so odd is that nowhere on the cover was there any mention of Radar, the hero, even though he was pictured or mentioned on almost every cover during his run in *Master* #50 (May 1944) through #87 (Jan 1948). I have no idea exactly when *Comics Novel* #1 was published in 1947, but perhaps Fawcett's editors purposely left Radar off the cover, knowing that the international policeman's time was nearly up in *Master*. He was replaced in *Master* by Hopalong Cassidy, who already had appeared in 14 issues of his own title heading into 1948.

At any rate, *Comics Novel* #1 has to rate as one of the oddest comics in Fawcett history, not to mention being the only Golden Age comic I can think of to star a villain in the title instead of the hero. The 51-page story started on the inside front cover and extended on both of the back covers

as well, similar to many Dell comics but unusual for Fawcett. Did Fawcett ever publish any other such comics, with no advertising of any kind? I can't remember any.

Radar, whose costume was a trench coat and a hat—making him look very much like a G-Man—was a great athlete originally know as Pep Pepper. Radar was gifted with two super powers: he could read minds and had "radar vision," which was even better than X-ray vision.

Torture page from **Comics Novel** #1.

The opening blurb of the story explains how Radar tracked down Anarcho, described as "the renegade American who broadcast for Germany during the war." Radar thought Anarcho had died in an explosion, but Anarcho survived to round up four criminals to help shatter the unsteady post-war peace: Erik Hevling, "Norway's No. 1 traitor," Diablo, "South America's No. 1 traitor," Lord Craven, "England's most vicious traitor," and Dr. Fu Tong, "China's most notorious traitor." Anarcho gives each top traitor his marching orders from his book entitled *Anarcho's Master Plans for Complete World Conquest*. Each villain, however, dies a fitting death at the hands of Radar in a full-length chapter as our hero gives lessons along the way about the evils of fascism.

In the last chapter, however, Anarcho traps Radar and, on the next-to-last page, tortures him by hanging him by the arms, squeezing his hands in an iron jaw, stretching him on a rack and grinding him into a bed of nails with a huge rock. Radar, though, holds his breath long enough to convince Anarcho to remove handcuffs to eliminate any evidence, giving Radar the opening he needs to flip the remarkable ugly villain into the bath of "lime acid".

"Five of the world's worst traitors are dead, but that doesn't mean we can relax our fight against the fascists!" Radar tells a group of government officials in the last panel. "New ones always arise!"

In view of what has happened since, it would be hard to argue with him.

Frances Gifford and unidentified airman

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#52 Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox $8
#58 Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton! $10
#65 Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane $8
#66 Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven! $8
#72 Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I $8
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by Pat Calhoun

Two Titanic Anti-Heroes

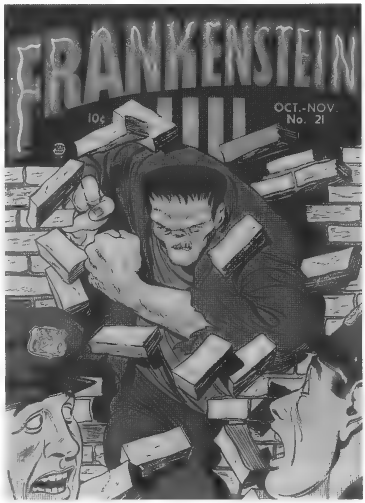
The Golden Age boasted many great and many minor heroes and many in between. And there was no shortage of villains: Dr. Sivana, Iron Jaw, the Joker, the Red Skull. Less common was the anti-hero, a more complex character, falling neither into a clear-cut role of good or evil. Although Timely's Submariner had plenty of "anti," the simplicity of super-hero packaging toned it way down. It's not surprising that the early 1950s—when a large percentage of comics were written for an adult audience—were more conducive to such subtle stances. Two characters stand supreme in this vein: Prize's Frankenstein and Hillman's Heap, especially after being made cover feature of *Airboy*.

Both characters had been around for a while, but both peaked during this era. Frankenstein had appeared regularly in *Prize Comics* since 1940, evolving—by the time he got his own title in 1944—into a humor character. The 17 Frankenstein issues from the 1940s were followed after a few years with issue #18 in 1952 putting Frankenstein back in the horror mold as that was the hot genre. Both versions were written and drawn—excellently!—by Dick Briefer.

It took a few issues for Briefer to develop the anti-hero theme. Issue 21 (Oct/Nov 1952), the fourth of the new series, has the monster still convinced that humans are his enemies since they always attack him. But the 13-page novelette "World of Monsters" is noteworthy because it is one of the best stories in the series. Frankenstein is almost a secondary character in this tale of a news reporter who comes upon a mad scientist's experiments in evolution (and inadvertent devolution) after a farmer had shot down a pterodactyl that flew off with a calf. The scientist's one success is a wildcat that has evolved into something of a young woman, and the tension builds in a triangle between Kit and the reporter and the scientist's daughter.

The backup stories in Frankenstein usually suffered from blandness, despite some enjoyable art (often by Mort Meskin). "Satan and the Sailor," about filming a "deal with the devil" horror movie on location in Death Valley has some excellent panels that add spice to a stock situation.

On Prize's *Frankenstein* #24 (Apr/May 1953) Briefer's cover perfectly captures the monster's struggle for self-identity as he painfully confronts his reflection in a pond. In "Friendly Enemies" two boys come across the monster asleep in the woods and are gentle with him after he wakes, and they play together with the boys promising to come back the next day. Of course a showdown with the town adults ensues. In Mary Shelley's novel the monster gained a tragic awareness of his plight, but Briefer's work with the character was cut short by the comic industry's censorship program (begun after government threats) in late

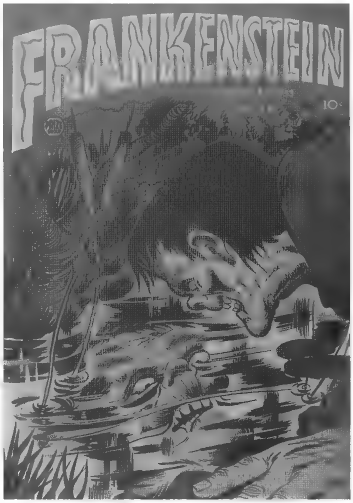


Frankenstein #21 (Oct/Nov 1952). The cover is certainly in the "men versus monster" mode, with Frankie bustin' loose, but inside, even his fighting people accomplishes good as it gives the "cat-girl" a chance to prove her humanity in a noble sacrifice.

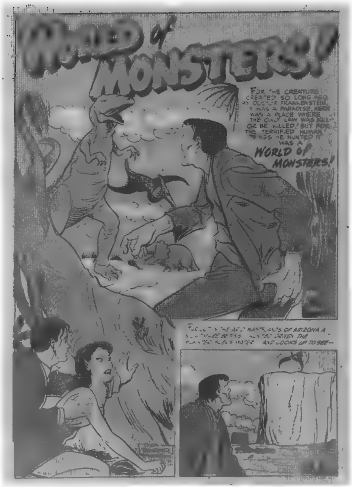
1954 that killed horror comics "overnight" in an act of violence that beggared most of the four-color atrocities.

The Heap had lurked in the latter pages of *Airboy* since 1942, when we were first told how the downed World War I air ace crashed into a Polish swamp from which he was respawned as the half-man half-plant. Once the Heap got his own strip (in 1946) the anti-hero theme locked in. The Heap's elevation to cover star in 1952 followed a trend of many anthology titles in those days of giving their back-of-the-book horror character a promotion after fantasy-horror had become the most popular comics genre. The Heap was a force of nature (in many ways the opposite of Frankenstein) so often he (?) would come into conflict with unsavory souls going against the grain. But like Frankenstein, the Heap was assumed by the "mob" to be a fiend.

Airboy #98 (Apr 1952) features the first Heap cover—with the "creature of mystery and terror that no man can understand!...in a weird tale of Mongolia!". Even after surrendering the cover spot, Airboy kept the lead position; in this issue he is forced into a "dogfight" against a jet whose pilot is a zombie! It's eerie, prophetic, and an exciting 13-page novelette.



Frankenstein #24 (Apr/May 1953). The monster's search for identity gave the character a psychological depth few others could match, and Briefer's cover sums up the difficulty of the quest.

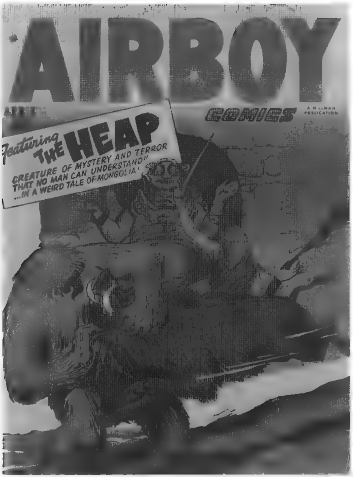


When a news reporter meets up with a cat-girl, dinosaurs, and the Frankenstein monster he knows he's got a sensational scoop—if he survives to report it! "World of Monsters" is a superb 13-page novelette in issue 21.

An excerpt from the Heap splash panel goes partway towards explaining how "he" came to Mongolia: "...A great shambling hulk that is neither animal nor man – yet a creature that is Nature's messenger to travel over the face of the earth..." The Heap's "globetrotting" not only provided local color, but allowed the "agent of nature moving among humans" theme to play out in various cultural settings. The stories often had the Heap onstage but briefly—coming in at the climax to tilt the actions of the other characters. This issue's cast is quite exotic, with a sorcerer who inhabits the body of a wild boar as well as a human form, a wandering minstrel, and a beautiful village girl in a mystical and satisfying 7-pager.

The cover art, Heap art, and Airboy art all come courtesy of Ernie Schroeder, who drew the strips for several years until the title (and Hillman's comic line) expired in 1953.

Airboy #110 (Apr 1953, the penultimate issue) has another one of those Heap covers that you think must be symbolic of the story but instead is a literal rendering of the


AIRBOY
COMICS
A M. LILIAN PUBLICATION
featuring THE HEAP
CREATURE OF MYSTERY AND TERROR THAT NO MAN CAN UNDERSTAND ...IN A WEIRD TALE OF MONGOLIA!

Airboy #110 (Apr 1953). Once again, Schroeder's Heap cover effectively unites the weird elements of the inside story. This is the last Heap cover, with Airboy returning to pilot the final issue (#111) into the sunset.

climactic action, high in the mountains of Eastern Europe (land of vampires). Not only is the Heap not a traditional hero, he's not even human, even less so than Frankenstein. In her original novel Mary Shelley hinted that Frankenstein (the "monster," that is) may be superhuman. But the Heap's mingling of plant and man makes him a creature uniquely "below and beyond" human, with actions guided by "Nature" itself.

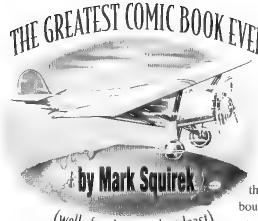
This amazing and underappreciated character is—in a quiet way—one of the most distinctive achievements of the Golden Age. The Heap debuted in the "Sky Wolf," strip, with his origin written by Harry Stein and drawn by Mort Leav. By the 1950s much of the energy that kept both Airboy and the Heap so fresh came from editor Ed Cronin.

Legend has it that Stan Lee has named the Heap as providing inspiration for his 1960s antihero,The Hulk.

COME, CARL JOHNSON, TAKE YOUR OATH WITH YOUR BROTHERS...
I GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS... I CAN'T GIVE AN OATH AS A BLOOD BROTHER UNLESS I MEAN IT!
BUT AIRBOY IS SPARED A DEVISION WHEN A CONCRETE BUNKER INTO THE WATCHING
MILITIA! THE MILITIA IS COMING THIS WAY!
QUICK, OUT WITH THE FIRES!
THE FLAMES ARE SMOKING AND THE DIABOLICAL AVENGERS SCURTLE DOWN A WATCH AREA...
THEN AN AWESOME SHIP VEERS AND REARS
WOW! IT'S A PLANE OF THE GODS! A FLYING SAUCER!
I'LL PEN

Airboy didn't skimp on the strange stuff either. Here—disguised as a young sailor who's jumped ship—he infiltrates a Viking revenge cult building a "UFO" in an "abandoned" Norwegian Nazi sub pen—just about ready to launch an attack on Iceland! From issue 110.

Airboy #98 (Apr 1952). When black magic blights an ancient land the Heap must restore the balance of nature. Ernie Schroeder's fine cover is emblematic of his work inside on the Heap, and Airboy too!

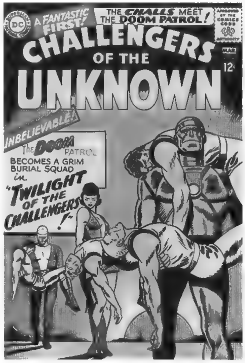


"Challengers of the Unknown" #48 and "Doom Patrol" #102

1965 was a great year for team-ups in the DC Universe. Aside from the usual glory of Superman and Batman in *World's Finest*, 1965 is the year that *Showcase* reintroduced the world to Dr. Fate and Hourman. Over in *The Brave and the Bold* they not only had the second appearance of the Teen Titans, but that summer they also featured the Silver Age revivals of Black Canary and Starman. The year finished up with the Teen Titans making their third appearance back in *Showcase*. It was a tiring year for both fans and the staff at DC. However, amidst all the hubbub and house ads about the reintroduction of the previously mentioned Golden Age Greats, there is one team-up that snuck in at the very last minute, just under the radar. It was a crossover between two of the lesser lights of the time.

Although it is cover dated March 1966, I swear I remember reading *Challengers of the Unknown* #48 during Christmastime 1965. Maybe my memory is stretching things a bit, I am not too sure here. After all, whether I want to admit it or not, that Christmas is 35 years in the past. Maybe I need to remember it that way so my rosy picture of 1965 will not shatter, but for whatever reasons my aged and addled memory demands, I am putting the Challengers crossover with *The Doom Patrol* #102 right up there with the other great team-ups of that time.

What I do know was that it was snowing when I sat down to read *Challengers* #48. What makes it really stick out in my memory is that it was not a title that was high on my list of regulars. I had read it many times in the past, but I had never specifically bought the *Challengers* title off the newsstand. It always seemed to show up in someone else's collection and I would quickly read through it. Actually, my motivation for quickly reading through it was to see the house ads for DC, just in case something on my regular list was coming out and I had missed it. (The house ads were always great; they were an important part of the whole book. That is the only thing wrong with DC's tremendous Archive series, no house ads!)



This issue of the *Challengers* was different. What had attracted me was the cover. I was a team-up fanatic and when I saw that the Doom Patrol was carrying the obviously dead Challengers across the cover, it certainly piqued my interest. With the sun coming up behind them and the way the bodies were being carried by each member of the Doom Patrol, it reminded me of a story I had once seen in a Batman *Annual*; "Robin Dies At Dawn."

Take a look at Robotman. He is carrying Ace in his arms and Rocky, the strongest Challenger by a mile, is draped lifelessly over his shoulders. With his chin held high, there are slight tears (of oil?) falling from his eyes. Behind him is Elasti-Girl. From the way she is looking down at Red in her arms, she seems to be imagining what might have been for the two of them if he had lived. While the other two members of the Doom Patrol are clearly moving forward, she seems motionless, standing still, lost in thought.

Behind his two team members, Negative Man holds the Prof. His head bowed respectfully, Negative Man is moving forward with the somber demeanor of a former military man. Across a stark, alien, desert-like terrain, the three members of the Doom Patrol are taking the Challengers to their graves.

The story opens with the Doom Patrol rushing to the aid of the Challengers. With help from the fantastic science of the bearded and wheel-chair bound Chief, they are able to communicate with the near-dead Challengers. The second page quickly establishes Robotman's confrontational and combative personality—he takes umbrage with Negative Man's quick response to the situation and has to do him one better by hauling two of the Challengers to the Doom Patrol's Headquarters, and grabbing Negative Man's lifeless human form with him. With the aid of the Chief, the Challengers begin to recount their adventures.

On a volcanic island the Challengers have imprisoned those who oppose them—"Challenger-Haters." There was Kra, an Alien robot; Volcano Man;

Drabny, who gained power through his thought waves; and "the ultimate rat-fink, Multi-Man," who could change into any life form. While stopping by with the monthly supply drop, the Challengers are attacked and left for dead. Decidedly not dead, the Challengers decide to fake their own deaths in order to draw the Challenger-Haters out of hiding. Weeks pass until a disappearing ocean-going vessel (the third one in ten days) piques their interest. Drawn out of hiding, they rush into combat and find that at the end they need to summon the Doom Patrol for medical assistance.

This shows an obvious self-awareness when it comes to the presence of other heroes in the DC Universe. As a matter of fact, when Multi Man turns into an Octopus, Rocky name checks Aquaman!

After they have told their story, the Chief is able to quickly develop a cure for the Challengers. Naturally, the first thing that happens is a shouting match between Robotman and Rocky. The insults fly… "Rock-head….reject from a scrap yard…stone skull…iron pants….boulder brains." This was a level of interaction between heroes that I had not really seen before. When Green Arrow and the Manhunter from Mars met over in *Brave and Bold* #50, there were no insults! For Pete's sake, back in *Showcase*, Dr Fate and Hourman were meeting for dinner in a restaurant. No one was yelling at each other! Everyone was civil. In the Challengers, everybody was beginning to act like recess at St. Richards' Grade School. There was yelling and pushing and shoving.

Naturally, they do team up and begin to work together. But by the end of the story, the Challenger-Haters have escaped and we need to follow the tale over in *Doom Patrol* #102, also March 1966. Adorned with go-go checks, *Doom Patrol* #102 acknowledges the visiting Challengers by putting their logo on the cover. In addition, there is a nice little sidebar featuring some not-so-nice name calling between Beast Boy (a "rotten kid") and Magneto (supposedly a "pot-headed nut"—Magneto may have been a truly messed up, but I seriously doubt that he was stoned during the commission of a heroic act, or a felony).

Between the go-go checks, the sidebar and the dominance of the green, underwater creature, the cover is nowhere near as effective as the *Challenger*'s cover was. However, it does promise so much action that it would be hard to avoid. The second page, second panel really establishes why the Doom Patrol are different from any other heroes in the DC world. There is a close-up of the Chief and he is really upset "….the Doom Patrol is goofing off someplace. I should fire the pack of them." He is right, they were goofing off. Robotman is showing off at a Hospital Carnival by lifting a boy in an iron lung over his head, Elasti-Girl is attempting to swim at the estate of the "Fifth richest snob in the world, Steve Dayton" and Negative Man is helping an unnamed Space Agency with a missile test.

DC
THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
DOOM PATROL
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
AGAINST ETERNITY
BEAST-BOY, THAT TEEN TERROR FROM THE MARATHON!
ROTTEN KID
MEETS MAGNETO, THAT NUTNIK-MASTER, THAT PSYCHIC DYNAMO THAT'S...
POT-HEADED NUT!
MULTI-MAN IN A NEW FORM CHALLS FOR FISH FOOD!

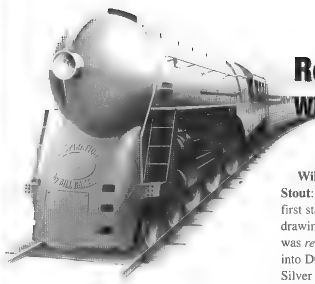
Basically, it is a team of misfits who are monstrously misunderstood by the world and their wheel-chair bound benefactor. What a strange premise for any group of heroes. When they finally get together with the Challengers, the Chief reveals the new menace they all face. Multi-man is trying to get an army of zombies together.

The crazy banter between practically everyone is even more pronounced than it was in the *Challengers*. Of course, Robotman and Rocky go at it, but Elasti-Girl also gets some digs in on the Millionaire, and Negative Man throws a few barbs at anyone who will listen. This was an interaction between heroes that I had never heard before. It really threw me for a loop. I loved it. Everybody was talking like the smart alecks I knew on the playground!

The whole cross-over began to challenge the way I looked at human interaction. Heroes were just as obnoxious and self-absorbed as other people I had met. Later on, of course, I would find whole other worlds and characters where self-doubt and sarcasm were the norm, but in 1965, at nine years old, *The Doom Patrol* and the *Challengers of the Unknown* opened a window I had not seen before.

This was not the only time that the Challengers had visitors. Soon after the Doom Patrol showed up, they hosted the Sea Devils in issue #51.

Between their Archives and *80 Page Giant* reprints, DC is doing a fantastic job of keeping the Silver Age alive. This January, they are releasing a great trade that covers another forgotten Silver Age crossover. Titled *JLA: Zatanna's Search*, they are collecting *The Atom* #19, *Hawkman* #4, *Green Lantern* #42, *Detective Comics* #335 and #355 and *JLA* #51 together for the first time. The crossover between the Doom Patrol and The Challengers may not be as epic in scope as Zatanna's search for her father, but it is an action packed story in itself. Maybe DC could take the Dr.. Fate/Hourman story, couple it with the Black Canary/Starman run and add the Doom Patrol /Challengers crossover for a tribute to 1965?



Renaissance Man

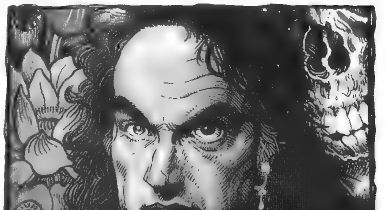
William Stout on his influences

by Bill Baker

He's an artist who moves easily between three very different, seemingly unrelated fields which require artists—comics, film and paleontology, or the study of dinosaurs. Even more telling, he's excelled in each of them. For example, he's won both the Eisner and Harvey for his comics work, counts George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Disney studios among his many clients in Hollywood, and has even been sent to Antarctica to study and paint the hearty wildlife and frozen landscape of that terribly beautiful continent by The National Science Foundation. And that's ignoring the fact that he assisted Russ Manning on the Tarzan *comic strip, and assisted Will Elder and Harvey Kurtzman on their delightfully naughty* Little Annie Fanny *cartoons which appeared for years in* Playboy, *or that he's designed numerous posters and album covers, lent his design skills to dozens and dozens of films, and helped design theme parks for Disney and Universal Studios.*

And that's just hitting a very few of the high points of William Stout's astonishing career. Quite simply, the man's an acknowledged master artist, and a modern titan of the illustrative arts. Still, all of these accomplishments have never kept him from openly and gladly acknowledging his debt to those who preceded him, and who have had an impact on his work.

CBM: Who are some of the folks that inspired you to pursue making art?



William Stout: When I first started drawing, I was *really* into DC's Silver Age comics. I was thirteen or fourteen, and the first guys that I copied, the guys whose work that I loved, were Gil Kane [*Atom* and *Green Lantern*] and Carmine Infantino [*Flash* and Adam Strange]. It wasn't until years later that I fell in love with the EC guys and Frank Frazetta.

I first discovered Frazetta through the Ace paperback covers and pen sketches that he was doing for the [Edgar Rice] Burroughs re-releases back in the early '60s. *That* stuff really excited me, and then there was the work that he did immediately after that for *Creepy* magazine, the covers and the occasional stories that he did. And then, shortly after that, he did those gorgeous brush and ink illustrations for the Canaveral Press editions of the Burroughs books. Boy, I just locked onto his work like some kind of a homing beam. He became an enormous influence on me.

As I started to look at his work, really study and research his work, I began to realize where a lot of his inspirations came from. By studying Frazetta's work, the worlds of the great early 20th Century and late 19th Century artists were opened up to me, and *those* guys eventually became even bigger influences on me than Frazetta.

Also, in the late '60s-early '70s, I was introduced to the work of Moebius, or Jean Giraud. The first work of his I saw I believe was the *Lieutenant Blueberry* work that was being serialized in *Pilote* magazine. And then someone showed me some of the science fiction work that he was doing under the name of Moebius, and I just flipped out. I got a subscription to the French magazine *Pilote* and began to collect Jean's work. His work, with its simplicity and elegance, and its spiritual qualities, had a big, big influence on me, as well.

But then, mostly after the major influence of Frazetta and Moebius—and also Alex Toth, whose storytelling is so powerful—I really began to concentrate on artists from the early part of the 1900s. The Pre-Raphaelites, especially

John William Waterhouse, became very important to me. American landscape painter Thomas Moran became a huge influence.

The early 20th Century children's book illustrators were also huge influences: Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, the Detmold brothers. J. C. Leyendecker, *the* illustrator when it comes to design, is the artist I consider the greatest illustrator-designer America ever produced. They all led me on this path that I'm still on. My goal in my work is to do 21st Century design and art with 19th Century observation, technique and sensibilities.

Russ Manning was another huge influence on me, because I was his assistant on the *Tarzan* Sunday and daily strips. Russ also was the one who turned me on to Japanese prints, which became another big influence on my color and design. In 1972 I was hired by Harvey Kurtzman to assist him and Willie Elder on *Little Annie Fanny*, and by that time, but actually, *before* I was even hired, Kurtzman was a big influence. I had been collecting all the *MAD* comics, and I had done a story called "Motorpsycho!" as an homage to Kurtzman and Elder and Wally Wood for *Cycletoons*. I sent off a copy of the magazine when the story was published to Kurtzman, and I got this letter back from Kurtzman asking me if I'd like to assist them on *Little Annie Fanny*. So, shortly, Kurtzman and Elder both loomed large in my art as well.

CBM: What about creators from other art forms, like movies?

Stout: Ray Harryhausen's a big influence on not only my drawings, but my film work. He introduced me to the world of special effects, and understanding that world. Through Ray's work I began to learn how to do all kinds of effects on film. When I got into motion pictures, special effects films became my specialty, and a lot of that was due to Harryhausen and Willis O'Brien's *King Kong*.

CBM: It's obvious that you've drawn from a wide range of folks over the years. How did you absorb those very diverse influences and make them your own? Was it a process of osmosis, so to speak, or were you very conscious of the process of adapting those techniques so they became second nature and an integral part of your palette?

Stout: In the late '60s-early '70s, I had a reputation as a guy who could duplicate any art style. I was able to look at different artists and their work, analyze it, and then quickly reproduce *that* particular style in such a way that it was almost indistinguishable from the original artist's own work. It was just an ability I had. But, eventually, I got tired of doing that, and I became much more interested in developing my own style.

The first consciousness of my *own* style came to me when I was doing my book *The Dinosaurs*. The way I approached doing the illustrations for that book ... I was still being influenced by a lot of different artists, and to keep the book fresh for me, I decided I would try to ape different children's book illustrators' styles in the production of illustrations for the book. So I would say, "This is going to be like an Andrew Wyeth dinosaur painting," "This is going to be as if N. C. Wyeth were to do a dinosaur painting," "This will look like an Arthur Rackham dinosaur drawing," "I'm going to channel Edmund Dulac here." But I had such a volume of work to do, and such a short time to do it, I couldn't go back and sort of slavishly imitate each guy down to every brushstroke. So, eventually, my own style emerged from that, just from my *memory* of what that work looked like. And so, filtered through my memory, my own style began to emerge, a style that was a combination of all those different influences. And I found that a lot more satisfactory than duplicating other people's styles. It was also much faster, which I liked. I just continued to do that, and pretty much stopped trying to copy other artist's style. After a while I pretty much lost the desire as well as a lot of the ability to do that kind of style duplication.

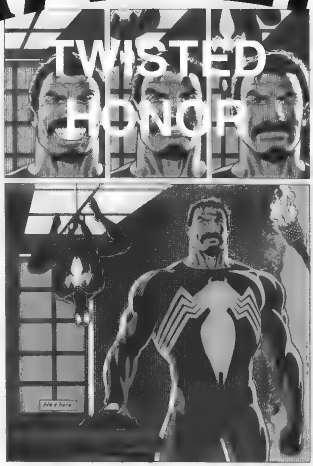
To this day, though, I'll *still* draw upon a lot of great people for inspiration. When the well runs dry, I'll crack open a book on Frazetta, or one of Harry Rountree's books, or Arthur Rackham. After recharging for awhile, I'll put their stuff away, and re-apply myself to my own work. There'll be a little bit of the essence of those guys in whatever I'm doing, but it will still come out looking primarily like my own stuff.

CBM: Anything else you'd like to add?

Stout: Only that I hope my talking about these different influences on my work drops a pebble in the pool, so to speak, and creates some ripples that lead others to discover the work of these great artists for themselves. I also talk about influences a bit in the FAQs section of my website, so if you have further interest, check it out at **www.williamstout.com**.

KRAVEN'S TWISTED HONOR

by John R. Stuart



What is it that defines a great comic book hero? Is it their super power, their personal philosophy or is it their costume? I believe a great hero is defined by all of the above, but perhaps the most crucial definition of a hero is the caliber of the villains that the hero must face in conflict.

Great heroes are judged by the antagonists that they face. Would Churchill be remembered as a great British leader if he hadn't faced the evil of Hitler? Would Roosevelt be remembered as a great president without the threat of Hirohito? Would anyone remember David without Goliath? The same premise holds true for comic book heroes. Great super villains define great super-heroes.

Batman faced the likes of the Riddler, Catwoman and the Joker. Superman battled with Lex Luthor, Bizarro, Brainiac and Doomsday. Spider-Man was also blessed with a series of better than average foes. He benefited from the genius of Stan Lee and Steve Ditko during their most creative period and this dynamic team produced an illustrious list of villains. Spider-Man had great enemies such as The Lizard, The Kingpin, Doctor Octopus and the Green Goblin. But one of Spider-man's greatest opponents, Kraven the Hunter is often ignored and all but forgotten.

The fertile minds of Lee and Ditko combined to produce Sergei Kravinoff A.K.A Kraven the Hunter. Kraven first appeared in August 1964 in *Amazing Spider-Man* #15. He was hired by the Chameleon as a mercenary to defeat his enemy, the powerful Spider-Man.

Kraven is a legendary big game hunter from Africa (of Russian descent) who has "trapped and defeated every type of beast that lives—and always single-handed."[1] Strangely, Lee picked the name Kraven, which is a variation of the word craven, which means cowardly. Cowardly is a word that would never be used to describe Kraven, but it does have a nice Russian sound.

Kraven owns one of the more interesting costumes ever seen in the comics, a lion's head vest, leopard's skin pants, with a belt studded with giant teeth, which serve as compartments for potions and weapons. The open vest allows the overdeveloped musculature of Kraven's chest to be exposed at all times adding to his aura of power and vitality.

Kraven is not just your average everyday big game hunter! He has incredible speed and strength that he has stolen from an African witch doctor. He brags to the Chameleon "With but one punch I can stop the charge of a bull elephant."[2] Clearly, here is a true challenge for the Amazing Spider-Man.

Amazing Spider-Man #15 is a great yarn, featuring a unique villain with a very different motivation. The story is well paced, with lots of action and has the typical feel of a Ditko-drawn story. After a great battle, where Kraven (with the assistance of the Chameleon) comes very close to defeating Spider-Man, Kraven is ultimately caught in Spidey's web and defeated. But Spider-Man, with his usual glib banter and wisecracks, makes fun of his beaten enemy while Kraven struggles in the webbing. Spider-Man has done this in every one of his battles, it's part of his special style and appeal. However in this instance this is a great error on Spider-Man's part. One does not make fun of Kraven the Hunter.

At the book's end Kraven and the Chameleon are deported to South America. Kraven is bitter and vows to

Great heroes are judged by the antagonists they face.

"continue our hunt for Spider-Man!! A hunt which will never end until he is destroyed!"

This proves to be a fateful statement. Kraven will return time after time to find Spider-Man to try and complete the hunt and reclaim his lost honor. Spider-Man is more than a trophy for Kraven; he has now become a life's quest for honor lost. Kraven will return to the pages of *ASM* at least 13 times, and pops up in other Marvel books.

Immediately, Kraven is unlike any foe that Spider-Man will ever face. His motivation for fighting and defeating Spider-Man is based solely on the challenge of the hunt itself. There is no criminal intent, no money to be gained, and no world domination—just the pure challenge of the hunt! Kraven breaks from this tradition in *ASM* #47 when he battles Spidey in order to accept a $20,000 reward offered by the Green Goblin. Ultimately, however, it is his obsessive hatred of Spider-Man that is the motive for his attacks, the money serves only as an added bonus.

As unique a foe as Kraven is, every one of his battles with Spider-Man tends to follow the same pattern. Kraven will employ a variety of tricks, potions, nets and trained animals—always

#34 (Mar 1966), Steve Ditko.

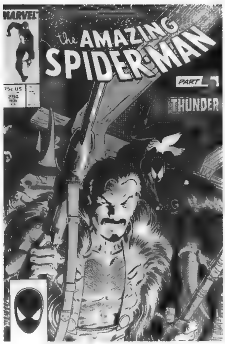
#47 (Apr 1967), John Romita.

leading to the same predictable result, a humbling victory for Spider-Man. The trend actually becomes very boring and if it weren't for some incredible art by John Romita Sr. in *ASM* #'s 47 and 49 these tales of Kraven would be mundane. But Romita produced some of his finest work on these early Kraven issues and the cover of issue 47 is a true classic.

Kraven continues to appear in *ASM*, and in every contest he falls before his enemy and as he does so, his hatred grows and grows, becoming an obsession that completely consumes him. Eventually it will drive him mad!

After his battle with Spider-Man in *ASM* #111, Kraven seems to disappear from the adventures of his chosen prey. He makes appearances in various other Marvel books, but he doesn't face Spidey again until 1987 when he appears in a six-part saga that crosses all three of the Spider-Man publications. This artistic tour de force by writer J.M. DeMatteis and penciler Mike Zeck stands as one of the greatest Spider-Man stories ever produced and was later published as a graphic novel entitled *Kraven's Last Hunt*. Mike Zeck's Kraven is drawn flawlessly, he has bulked the Hunter up until he has the proportions of a body builder, he now towers over Spider-Man.

It would be difficult to provide a complete synopsis of the story



arc in this article, but I'll provide a brief overview. In Part 1, "The Coffin" (*Web of Spider-Man* #31), Kraven is descending into madness, he is beginning to feel his advancing age, yet there still remains the quest to conquer Spider-Man. Kraven hunts his foe and shoots him with a drugged dart. Spider-Man is captured and buried alive by Kraven.

Part 2, "Crawling" (*Amazing Spider-Man* #293), sees Kraven assuming both the identity and crime fighter's role of Spider-Man. The genetically altered mutant Vermin is loose and terrorizing the city, while Spider-Man lies drugged and buried in a cemetery plot. Kraven's madness has totally consumed him. Kraven as Spider-Man actually rescues Mary Jane from a pair of street thugs, but his over-the-top violence convinces her that this is not her husband in the black costume. This issue from *ASM* #293 features one of the all time classic covers by Mr. Zeck.

Kraven as Spider-Man continues his reign of vigilante violence in Part 3, "Descent" (*Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man* #131), and his jungle powers eventually lead to his unintentional killing of a drug dealer. Vermin and Kraven (as Spidey) fight a titanic battle in the sewers. Kraven overcomes Vermin and carries him away to captivity while Spider-Man is stirring in his grave.

In Part 4, "Resurrection" (*Web of Spider-Man* #32), Spider-Man experiences a terrifying nightmare as he struggles to fight his way free of his drug-induced burial. At last he digs his way from the grave and stumbles into Kraven's mansion, where he learns that two weeks have passed and that someone has assumed his identity. He discovers evidence that indicates Kraven has committed crimes dressed as Spider-Man. Weakened and disoriented he makes his way home to Mary Jane, but is driven to again seek out Kraven.

The long-anticipated climax to the story occurs in Part 5, "Thunder" (*Amazing Spider-Man* #294). Spidey and Kraven fight one last battle, and Vermin escapes from his cage. The weakened Spider-Man is no match for Vermin and only Kraven's intervention saves Spider-Man from death. Kraven aids his long-time enemy and releases Spider-Man. Kraven has finally proven himself to be superior to Spider-Man, the hunt is at last over. His twisted honor is reclaimed.

Kraven's own words are "The demon I have at long last…defeated,"[4] represent both his own battle with his personal madness and his battles with his arc enemy. As Spider-Man pursues Vermin into the storm, Kraven takes a hunting rifle and blows his brains out, at last he has found "Peace, calm, happiness and ending."[5]

This issue is one of the greatest books in the long history of Spider-Man and likely features the first suicide of any major character in the comics industry. Beautifully drawn by Mike Zeck and brilliantly written by De Matteis, Kraven has completed his last hunt. This issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* also features another classic cover, one of the greatest Kraven images ever produced.

The story arc is completed in Part 6, "Ascending" (*Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man* #132), where Spider-Man pursues Vermin into the sewers for their final battle. After a classic struggle, Vermin escapes from the sewers and flees to daylight to again be captured by Spider-Man and turned over to the police. The authorities have discovered a written confession left by Kraven, which clears Spider-Man of the killing of the drug dealer. Spider-Man is exonerated! Kraven's minions have laid him to rest in the grave beside the plot where Spider-Man was interred. Thus ends the great six-part story.

Kraven is a great character because of his personal demons and extraordinary physical skills. What made him such a perfect adversary for Spider-Man were the close similarities between the two characters. Spider-Man is basically a hunter at heart, he scours the city for criminals, not for profit or gain, but to alleviate the guilt he constantly feels. Kraven likewise is by definition a hunter, blindly seeking Spider-Man, his motivation is his lost honor.

Seldom are major super villains killed off in the comics industry, and I cannot find another example on the Internet of a super villain committing suicide. Does this comic book first belong to Kraven? Please let me know if there are any other examples of suicide by a major super villain.

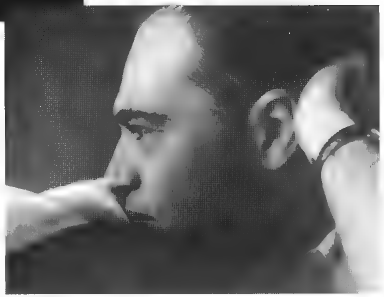
Kraven the Hunter must stand as one of the greatest adversaries of the Amazing Spider-Man. He hunted and battled Spider-Man with a tenacity and obsession that is virtually unparalleled in the history of the Web Slinger.

[1] *Amazing Spider-Man* #15, page 3
[2] *Amazing Spider-Man* #15, page 7
[3] *Amazing Spider-Man* #15, page 22
[4] *Amazing Spider-Man* #294, page 4
[5] *Amazing Spider-Man* #294, page 23

The Colors of Evil

The Black-Hearted Villains of Carmine Infantino

by Bill Baker



Vintage 1958 photo of Carmine Infantino from his autobiography **The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino** (courtesy of Vanguard).

Carmine Infantino is without question one of the most important creators to ever have worked in comics. His role in the revival of the super-hero genre alone—he drew Showcase *# 4, which introduced a newly re-imagined Flash and subsequently launched the Silver Age—would qualify him for inclusion in any planned four-color hall of fame. But Infantino's contributions to the art form and the business are legion.*

In addition to his stellar run on The Flash, *he co-created a veritable who's who of heroes and villains, ranging from Animal Man and Black Canary to Deadman and the Phantom Stranger, as well as the infamous group of felons known as the Rogues Gallery, which has plagued the Flash throughout his storied career. He also was instrumental in the phenomenally successful revival of the Batman franchise at a time when the venerable Caped Crusader faced the one foe who he seemingly couldn't defeat—plummeting sales—which in turn lead not only to the introduction of such iconic characters as Blockbuster, Poison Ivy and Batgirl, but also the popular '60s TV show featuring the Dark Knight Detective. This media connection only grew stronger over the years as he worked on a variety of film and TV projects including* The Superfriends *animated show and the first two Superman films. And that's ignoring his role as DC's Art Director—later Editorial Director and then Publisher—which required that he design the cover of every DC comic being published each and every month for years and years.*

So it should be little surprise that Carmine Infantino would have a few stories of interest to share about his decades in the business. And while many of these tales can be found in his excellent and profusely illustrated autobiography, The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino, *this particular interview concerns an important, previously untold chapter of his creative life—the true origin of the Flash's Rogue Gallery.*

Bill Baker: Carmine, you've created a fair number of villains during your career. It's been said in the past that one of the things that makes a hero truly great is the quality of his or her opponents. Would you agree with that statement?

Carmine Infantino: Oh, absolutely, because the hero is *nothing* without the villain, I think. Take Batman and the Joker—there's your perfect example. The Joker makes The Batman.

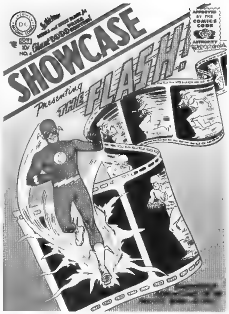
Baker: Is it the idea of the eternal opposition between good and evil, a kind of yin and yang, that gives such relationships much of their power?

Infantino: Pretty much. You always want the hero to have confrontation with somebody equally strong, so that the yin and yang would be a perfect example.

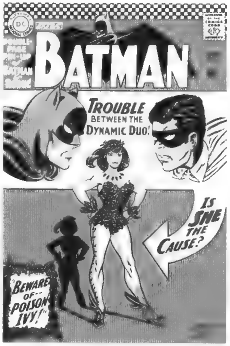
Baker: What were some of the more important aspects that you considered while trying to design some of your villainous creations?

Infantino: Well, first of all, he's got to look evil. That's the main concept. And you keep him dressed darkly. Dark colors, and dark shapes, constantly. And they're always grimacing constantly. And you give them these nasty-looking eyes, that usually helps, too.

Cover images courtesy of Vanguard



The world-famous, historic Infantino cover that launched the Silver Age! (**Showcase** #4, Oct 1956)



Batman #181 One of the sexiest villains Infantino ever created, Poison Ivy, is more popular today than ever!

Baker: So it's not just the costume design or powers that are important?

Infantino: Oh, no. No, the physical is very important. How you set them up, you know? I think that's the most important part. So, physically, you've got to give the appearance of something—*unclean*, I guess, is the best word. [General laughter]

Baker: Would that also influence their body language, as well?

Infantino: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

The Flash's Rogues Gallery of villains are some of my most important characters—Captain Boomerang, The Trickster, The Pied Piper, Captain Cold, Mr. Element. Some are unique in that they vary from the dark, grimacing type. Captain Boomerang is one of my favorites. Originally, in my first concept for him, he was a character called Blue. I did a proposal for a group called the Colors of Evil, and Captain Boomerang is the one that came out of the Blue character. A flamboyant, cheeky character, and body language was very important to communicate that.

Baker: How important was his nationality, out of curiosity?

Infantino: Well, in this case he was Australian, and that had something to do with it, but not that much, actually. His concept was already set. Julie made him an Australian; but in my original concept it was just the word "Blue" and he was a very flamboyant character, with the scarf and the works.

Baker: In that original version, was the character also a master of the boomerang?

Infantino: Oh, yeah. He had a boomerang. That was the key to him. That's why, when Julie mentioned it, I went, "Oh boy, have I got one for you!" And they were done already.

Baker: The Colors of Evil is an aspect of your career that's unknown. What were the Colors of Evil, originally, and how did they end up becoming the Rogue's Gallery of the Flash?

Infantino: Many years before, while DC was in that period of trying everything in creation to boost sales before the Flash connected, I was trying to create a newspaper strip. Well, one of the things I created was called *Captain Whiz and the Colors of Evil*, and this flashy character was Captain Whiz, and, of course, the villains were the Colors of Evil. I took it to Joe Simon originally, who was a good friend, and wanted to sell it to Joe. I think he made a note of that in his book [*The Comic Book Makers*], if I'm not mistaken. And he loved it, but he said, "Carmine, we're not into that right now," and that was the end of it. So I put it aside.

Bob Kanigher visited me one day and he saw the Colors of Evil. Then, later on when Bob and I created the new Flash, he said, "Remember those characters you were showing me one day at your apartment?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Are you using them?" I said, "Not so far." He said, "How about using them for the Flash?" And I said, "OK," and there they were. They were all done.

Baker: Did they all have their distinct powers and identities at that time, or did they change a little?

Infantino: They all had pretty much the same powers. But some changes were made with Kanigher writing and Julie editing. Mirror Master was pretty close, and the Trickster was *very* close. And the original version of Gorilla Grodd wasn't a gorilla; I had him as a guy dressed up in a gorilla outfit, running around stealing things. [General laughter] But, basically, that was him.

Baker: It was a different era then, wasn't it?

Infantino: Pretty much, yeah. I came up with villains for Batman too. Poison Ivy was mine.

I would create a cover at home. I'd create a couple of them, actually, and I'd bring them into Julie and have him look at them. Then he'd pick one that he wanted and have someone write a story around it. And, of course, that happened with Poison Ivy, and all of the Flash villains. Every one, I kept using them, one after another, on the covers, and he loved them all and we kept doing them. It was easier for him that way. And you know how the movie serials had cliffhangers at the end? Well, I tried to set one up on every cover I created. And it worked; our covers were doing quite well.

Baker: Speaking of doing well, the

first appearance of the Flash really started things up, didn't it?

Infantino: Oh, yeah. The Flash, of course, took off like a rocket. I guess it was time and it was very innovative. Nobody believed the numbers, at first. And then they tried a second and a third issue, and then they knew right away that it had connected. In those days, you were *lucky* to be getting forty, forty-two, forty-three percent sales. All of a sudden, this thing came in at about fifty-six, fifty seven—the *first* one. And it was so good, nobody believed it.

And this was in *Showcase*. So they waited, I think, for one or two issues before we did it again. The *Showcase* numbers dropped down again, after the Flash. When the second Flash story appeared, it popped back up again: fifty-seven, fifty-eight. High again. And they gave it one more shot. I think it crossed sixty at that point, and *then* they knew they had a winner on their hands. [General laughter]

Baker: Do you think villains, and society's view of them, have radically changed since you were active in the field?

Infantino: I haven't kept a close watch on those things. But the ones that I've seen have gotten more violent. And I always had a touch of comedy to them. So they were a little bad, but not *that* bad. There was a charm to the villains back then. You remember? But *now*, they're brutal, and I don't think that's the way to go. But again, as I said, I'm not in it now, so I don't know.

Baker: Yeah. There was a sense of fun, or one-upsmanship, so to speak, in the older stories.

Infantino: Gamesmanship, maybe that was what the whole thing was about. So actually, it was like a couple of kids, squaring off on one another. Or who would win the chess game. But nobody really got killed in these things.

Baker: It was an *incredible* rarity when someone did get killed, yes.

Infantino: *Very* rare. And they were more fun. But now, these guys are brutal! You don't even want to read about them. I just don't think kids are reading today, that's the bigger problem.

Now look at Spider-Man. Didn't *Spider-Man* crack all kinds of records when it was on screen? So did *Superman*, when we did those films—and *Batman*. They did well. So I guess kids just aren't reading. Publishing's the problem.

Baker: Right, that combined with the distribution problem, and just getting comics into the hands of a larger audience by making them more widely available.

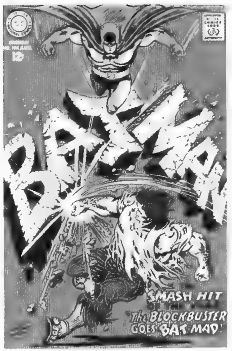
Infantino: That could be, too. They used to use that hue and cry all the time, "Distribution, distribution, distribution!" But how come some books just sell all of a sudden? How come the Flash took off like a rocket if distribution was so bad? There *was* a problem with distribution, but I think, by and large, the basic characters had mass appeal.

And then, nowadays, these prices are pretty rough on these things, I think. What, are they $2.50, $3.00 now for a book for what, 22 pages of story? I mean, come on! That's really not fair. I'm sure that's *part* of the problem. But then again, if they don't keep the price up, the distributor won't touch the books. [Laughter]

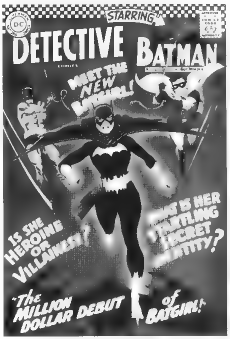
TV is part of the answer. I think they're going in that direction more and more now. Because every time we tried it, like with *Superfriends* and I think they did the *Teen Titans* at one point, they seemed to sell well on TV.

Baker: And I'd imagine that probably fed back into sales of the books then, didn't it?

Infantino: That's right. As I wrote in my autobiography, Batman was dying. Julie and I were called in to the publisher's office and were told, "You've got six months to turn this thing around." It was *that* bad; that's how badly it was doing. And we took it on, and it started to come up *slowly*. But, in truth, it wasn't until [producer] William Dozier saw a copy of a Batman comic on the stands while walking through an airport, and he liked it and brought it to television, that BOOM! the sales went through the roof. We were selling ninety-



The revolutionary **Batman** #194 cover by Infantino features one of the many villains he created for Batman. This one, BLOCKBUSTER!



The producers of the Batman TV show asked DC for another female character to alternate with Catwoman. Editor Julius Schwartz teamed with Infantino to create BATGIRL whose "Million Dollar Debut" posed the question "Is She Heroine or Villainess?"

Flash #113 Infantino created the Trickster for the Flash based on his earlier Black, Colors of Evil concept. Other Colors of Evil included Blue, which became Capt. Boomerang and, Purple: Gorilla Grodd.

nine percent. So, yeah, one usually feeds off of the other. But after the desire for that show died, the books died with it, because it was really camp. And then we had to start reinventing him all over again.

Baker: The *Spider-Man* movie only brought up sales on the Spider-Man comics in a very short term, nothing like what you'd expect after looking at what happened in the past.

Infantino: Aren't these reprint hard covers selling?

Baker: Yes, but there are a number of people who insist that it's mainly a baby boomer, nostalgia-seeking crowd buying those. But in the book store market itself, original graphic novels and collected editions, are selling—sometimes in amazing numbers.

Infantino: They're reprinting all my old Flash stories. I get money on that, you know. So I understand, though, that 20,000 is a big print order on those, but they're charging $40. On the Deadman collection, they charged $75. That's a little high. I hear that they're going to come out with the first *Adam Strange* Archive.

Baker: Yes, they are. And speaking of Adam Strange, I was curious if you had to change your approach at all when you went from creating villains to oppose the super-hero characters to those with more of a science fiction basis?

Infantino: Yeah, because I even changed Adam Strange. I didn't create that character, you know. Murphy Anderson claims he did, and Gil Kane claimed he did; well, I don't know who to believe. But Mike Sekowsky did the first issue. I was in Korea at the time, but when I came back apparently it was planned for me from the start. So I spoke to Mike and he said, "No, no. I was told it was just a temporary thing," so then I took it on.

So not only did I change the villains, but I changed him, and the girl. Made modifications in the costume and things. I think they had him with bare arms. How do you go through space with bare arms, you know? [General laughter] And the strange rocket pack, and stuff like that. The one he had on, it could burn his behind as he went, so I made changes. I updated him, and I created the villains as I went through it.

I enjoyed working on that one. I created a bunch of new villains: The Sand Devils, and then those twin villains. I don't remember their names anymore. I just kept coming up with them, and Julie would have stories written around them. We favored that format, by the way, and it worked *very* well for us. I'd create stuff, bring it in, and Julie would either take stuff or reject it. And the ones he accepted he'd have stories written around, and then they'd take the cover and use it. And that's how these villains were born pretty much.

Baker: Did you try to keep Julie's sensibilities in mind while creating those covers?

Infantino: No, no, no. The only thing I used to have in mind was two things on the covers: cliffhangers and an unusual character. And I had some stored up. Like I told you, I did those Colors of Evil, so I had about fifteen, sixteen characters sitting there waiting all the time. So I'd just go back and pluck one of those out and bring it in. They worked, and he liked them as they came in.

Baker: Well, that leads to the question of where the initial ideas for these various villains came from? Did you just sit around and brainstorm, or did they suddenly just appear via inspiration, out of the blue?

Infantino: I just did them on my own, because in those days getting work was very tough. It wasn't handed to you. And what Julie used to tell me was, "Well, if you come in with interesting covers, we'll write stories for them and there'll be more work for you." So I'd go home and sit there and start creating things. So I was really creating work for myself.

Baker: How did you know when you had the right name for a character?

Infantino: The ones that we used for The Flash—again the colors were blue, yellow, green, purple—to me, these were colors I *hated*, so we used those for the villains. [General laughter] The red I reserved for Captain Whiz, which became The Flash later—Captain Whiz was really the same character. In fact, Joe Simon has said to me many times, "I should have taken that thing on at the time."

Baker: Aside from the obvious, making a living, what did you get from creating comics?

Infantino: The rate was not that great, by the way, in those days. I was getting top rate, and that was $30 a page. And that was top money. In my heyday at DC as an artist, I think I was making $17,000 or $18,000 a year, which is not a lot of money. Stan [Lee at Marvel] called me and offered me, I think, $22,000 if I was ready to jump. And then Irwin Donenfeld, who was running DC at the time, offered me the job as the Art Director because he liked my work and my covers sold best. In fact, I think they were the *only* thing selling at that point. So he said, "I'd like you to become Art

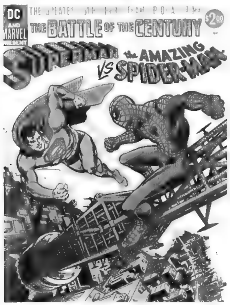
Director and have you design all the covers," which I did. When I continued on to become Editorial Director and Publisher, I kept designing all the covers along the way. Thirty books, thirty covers a month!

Baker: Well, what did you get from doing all that work?

Infantino: Personally, you mean? At times it was satisfaction. When you finish a job, some jobs you know instinctually how good they felt. And some jobs you dislike completely.

Now, strangely enough, I did not enjoy doing Batman. Maybe because Kane was still involved. I drew *Detective Comics*, and Kane was doing *Batman*. But I did all the covers. Maybe I resented him. I didn't care for many things. Although Adam Strange was fun.

You know why he was fun? I *desperately* wanted to be an architect, but in those days, we were born of the generation of the Depression. Depression kids, we were lucky to finish high school, for God's sake! So to go to college and become an architect, that was literally out of the question. So here's my way of feeding into this desire, especially on Adam Strange. I could design all the cities I wanted. I even did it on *The Flash*, if you notice, different types of cities.



Spider-Man is the villain on this historic cover designed by Carmine Infantino and finished by Andru and Giordano.

So that was fun. You asked me what was the fun? That was the fun part.

Baker: What do you feel was your biggest contribution to the art of comics?

Infantino: I did my autobiography, *The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino* with J. David Spurlock and his company Vanguard. That book, and *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* by Arlen Schumer, both discuss in depth my focus on and introduction of modern and abstract design into comics.

In the Golden Age, I was influenced by Milt Caniff and was doing drawing and rendering like everyone else, but I was not getting satisfaction. Then I went back to school and I studied with a guy called Jack Potter, and he was really a design specialist. He designed some Coca-Cola ads. He was a great teacher, and Jack taught me design.

So at that stage, I had to throw away pretty much all the drawing I knew, and reinvent myself. And the work was coming out very badly at DC. Julie was even getting annoyed with it. "What the hell happened to your stuff? It's looking terrible!" Well, it was going through a transition from one thing to the other. And then, of course, when it broke through, then it became a style of my own. I think my style stood out by itself. I don't think it was an imitation of anyone else.

Baker: Actually, I'm one of those people who enjoys watching artists working through transitions in their styles.

Infantino: It's a tough time, but it's good for you, because you get the growth.

In my autobiography I called it my Unfinished Symphony, but my stuff was evolving again right as I became an executive at DC. And when I stopped drawing to run the company, it came to an end. And I don't know what the hell it would have evolved into next, frankly, but it was going through big changes again. And, of course, we'll never know what the changes were, because I stopped. [Laughter] That's history.

Flash #136 Infantino created Mirror Master for the Flash based on his earlier Yellow, Colors of Evil concept.

But, basically, I'm a *designer* rather than an artist or draftsman. People say, "What's the difference?" There's a *big* difference, actually, and that's what set me apart from the other fellas. But we had such great talent over there—there was [Joe] Kubert, Alex Toth, Nick [Cardy]—all these wonderful, talented guys. So I think I was very fortunate, in a way.

Baker: What do you hope that readers, both those long-time fans and those just discovering your work today, get from your work?

Infantino: That there are still today people who look back on this stuff and enjoy it, that was a little bit of shock for me. But I appreciate it. I appreciate that people do like it.

For more information on the rich history and career of Carmine Infantino, there's no better place to start than with The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino, *published by Vanguard Productions. The book is readily available via comic shops and book stores, and can be ordered directly from the company's website at* ***http://www.creativemix.com/vanguard/***.

by Mike Wilbur

Bring on the Bad Guys, Part 1

When it comes to comic character statues depicting villains, Golden Age evildoers are overwhelmingly outnumbered by their Silver, Bronze and Modern Age successors. So, we face a much different challenge with this month's column than we will two issues from now with a focus on Silver Age villains.

With this villainous installment, we need to cast a wide, inclusive net for our subjects. Some may quibble with the inclusion of villains from the realm of comic strips, but then, Russ can deal with them because they'll no doubt be the same tunnel-visioned individuals who complain when he runs articles on strip artists and characters.

With that in mind, let's dive right in.

The earliest comics villains making the jump to three-dimensional depiction all come to us courtesy of the folks at **Dark Horse Comics**, and their line of Syroco-styled **Classic Comic Characters** mini-statues. The Dark Horse pieces are all limited editions of 600.

The first wave of the retro-styled Dark Horse pieces featured **Bluto** (release #23), adversary of **E.C. Segar**'s **Popeye the Sailor**. Snarling, and fists clenched, **Bluto** stands ready to pummel his squinty-eyed nautical nemesis and steal his "goil" **Olive Oyl**.

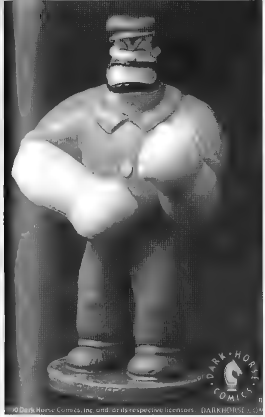
The 36th release in the Dark Horse line-up is the infamous **Ming the Merciless**, interplanetary conqueror and sworn enemy of **Alex Raymond**'s legendary hero **Flash Gordon**. The evil emperor strikes a contemplative pose as he plans his next assault on our hero and his allies.

Ming is also paired with his dashing adversary **Flash** in a mini-bust set issued in 2003 by **Bowen Designs**. The set was sculpted by **Randy Bowen**, based on Raymond's character designs, and was produced in a limited edition of only 1,500.

Meanwhile, back on the Dark Horse roster we find the **Dragon Lady** (release #16), seductive villainess from **Milton Caniff**'s *Terry and the Pirates*. One of the most impressive details of this four-inch tall Dragon Lady piece is the coiled dragon image adorning the back of her robe.

Jumping over into the pages of the Golden Age of Comics, we find several of comicdom's most notorious (and long-lived) villains immortalized in cold-cast porcelain.

Many of our archetypal fictional characters have foes who are inextricably linked with them. You can't think of one without the accompanying image of the other. David and Goliath. Samson and Delilah. Captain Ahab and Moby Dick. Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham. This pattern holds true within the pages of our favorite comic books as well, and some of our most



famous (or infamous) villains have followed their foes into the realm of three dimensions.

The **Red Skull**, Nazi mastermind and decades-long nemesis of **Captain America**, entered the scene as a **Randy Bowen**-sculpted mini-bust in 1999, the 11th release in Bowen Designs' series of **Marvel** mini-busts. The Red Skull's evil eyes glare from beneath the protruding brow of his **Kirby**-esque visage, as he clenches his trademark cigarette holder in his teeth. Edition size was limited to 3,000.

On the other side of the aisle, **Lex Luthor**, in his crazed evil scientist persona featured throughout the Golden Age, holds a ray gun in hand as he stares with fiendish glee at the chunk of Kryptonite he will use to power the weapon. Arch-enemy **Superman** had best be on guard against Luthor's latest plot. The **Classic Lex Luthor** mini-bust was sculpted by **Tim Bruckner** and released by **DC Direct** in 2002 in a limited edition of 1,200.

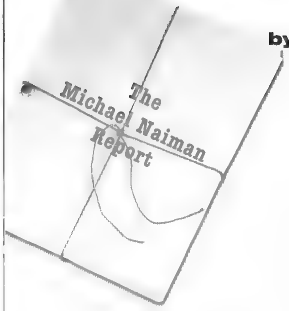
The **Classic Bizarro** mini-bust, also sculpted by Bruckner and released by DC Direct in 2002 in an edition of 1,300, features another of the Man of Steel's long-time adversaries. Bizarro is an "imperfect duplicate" of Superman inadvertently created by Luthor in a failed experiment. Bizarro's twisted nature causes him to do everything the opposite of the true Superman.

And of course no roster of Golden Age DC villains would be complete without the Clown Prince of Crime, as represented by the **Classic Joker** mini-bust, once again provided by Tim Bruckner and the folks at DC Direct. The laughing lunatic prepares to puncture a balloon adorned with the image of his nemesis **Batman**. Probably Batman's (if not the whole DC Universe's) most popular villain, the Joker mini-bust was

produced in a limited edition of only 2,500.

So that pretty much wraps up the roster of Golden Age villains available in sculpted form. Sorry to report that the likes of **Doctor Sivana**, **Mister Mind**, the **Claw**, **Brain Wave**, and other top bad guys of the '40s are not represented among existing statue releases (although Bowen *is* producing a statue of the **Claw**'s arch-enemy, the Golden Age **Daredevil**—under the revisionist name **Red Devil** to avoid a copyright dispute with Marvel, publisher of the current, unrelated Daredevil).

Be back here in two months for the Silver Age villain rundown!



by Michael Naiman

Ten New Years

Ten years have passed since *CBM* first saw the light of day in Gary Carter's Coronado garage. *CBM* has gone through different permutations and has changed format and look from time-to-time in order to appeal to new and different collectors while still maintaining their touch with their Golden and Silver Age constituency.

We've seen Sotheby's and Christie's auctions ignite the market, the AACC brought collectors together to honor the founding fathers, artists and great contributors, the electronic comic shop is now open 24/7 on the Internet and the third party grading service has given the high end market a new place to gather.

I am sad to report that the Komix Korner in Tom Batiuk's *Funky Winkerbean* strip had to close its doors! Another famed retailer bites the dust. I'll miss those mornings sharing the store's adventures while sipping my wake-up coffee.

But, while the high end of the marketplace is populated with 10% of the collecting community, there is a huge population of those folk who still need to know what GD, VG, FN and VF- books sell for. That's part of my mission in this column, to inform the readership of the forces that affect what they pay for their books, as well as what is driving these forces and, of course, the prices paid for their favorite issues.

Two-and-a-half years ago I told you about one person who had a history of scamming unsuspecting collectors. In January, the weekly comics journal decided to "out" this person and shed light on his nefarious doings—*30 months* after I reported about him. I've been accused of being the crusty comics curmudgeon, but my intentions are to ask questions, cause debate and discussion so that the hobby can thrive and grow, and not fall prey to manipulation that might destroy the hobby we love.

So, what's been going on in the New Year? It has been no surprise that CGC-graded Golden Age books in VF or better are going for prices that far exceed *Guide*. A surprise to anyone? Not likely. These books would skyrocket in price whether they were slabbed or not. They're just impossible to find under any circumstances. The *Guide* (because of the time constraints with publishing) has a difficult time keeping up with the jumps in these prices. On the other hand, that's why *CBM* and the *Price Update* can be valuable to collectors!

Colossus #1 published by Sun Publications in 1940 recently sold for $550. This is a one-of-a-kind piece as it contains the signatures of nearly all the contributors (both artists and writers). Undoubtedly one of the earliest vintage signed comics extant. It was reported that this copy was presented to the publisher's son. Overstreet lists this as scarce and Gerber gives it a scarcity index of 7.

Speaking of slabbed books, a copy of *Uncle Scrooge* #198 (Apr 1983) graded an 8.5 (VF+) sold for $162.50 recently. Nearly 10X *Guide*! This has been touted by some as being the third rarest *Uncle Scrooge* book to locate. Huh? I had ten Near Mint issues of #195-200 in a purchase of Gold Key and Whitman books a few years back. For my money the toughest *U$* books to find *IN GRADE* would be #6 (I've *never* seen this in any better than VF-), #179, #24 and *FC* #495. A VG Restored issue of *FC* #29 ("The Mummy's Ring") recently went for $712 (about 1.3X GD *Guide*). Not bad for a book one never sees in FN or better.

The long-time weak sister Silver Age *Green Lantern* title seems to be making a slight rebound these days with solid sales in the pre-teen issues: #4 FN $150 (1.6X *Guide*), #6 FN $140 (1.6X *Guide*), #9 VF $175 (1.4X *Guide*). Then there's *Doctor Strange* #169-183 in NM condition that has sold for 1/2 NM *Guide*!

Because the Internet has made collecting much easier for foreign enthusiasts, many issues are making their way overseas. I've seen a huge interest emanating from (in order of demand) England, Germany, the Scandinavian countries (with a very high Disney demand) and Italy. PayPal has made the impulsive reflex of purchasing a snap.

Mad Cow! Mad Cow! In the midst of beefophobia, a *RONALD MCDONALD* #1 (Charlton Sep 1970) in NM-condition has sold for $73 which translates to 73% of *Guide*!

Image stealing on eBay is becoming a bigger and bigger problem. Creeps steal someone's scan and then post it in an auction as if they own it. Unfortunately, eBay is doing very little to combat the problem.

Word is that Jeff Jones is attending an upcoming con in Atlanta. One of Jones' well-known oils just sold for a combination of $45k cash and trade. Continued action on high end Wrightson B/W and paintings. All the Studio artists remain white hot.

Is the Byrne market undergoing a correction? Some interior pages have been moving at lower than usual prices. Most likely not. Just some shuffling for bigger deals. The market looks generally healthy with the usual ups and downs. Risso Batman pages have been very popular selling out at $400-$900, which is a lot for a modern artist.

Until next time!

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Amazing Spider-Man

#1	VG	"$1725"	1.02X
#3	FN	$890	1.44X
#3	FN	$666	1.08X
#8	FN	$338	1.23X
#11	VF	$270	65%
#14	FN	$407	85%

Archie

#6	VF	$865	1.07X
#6	GD-	$120	1.32X
#8	GD	$125	1.37X
#19	FN+	$66	36%
#36	FN+	$34	42%
#51	NM	$132	1.06X
#52	FN+	$42	1.4X
#55	VF	$91	1.3X
#57	VG	$16	80%
#58	FN+	$40	1.33
#61	FN+	$34	1.41X
#74	FN+	$53	2.94X
#78	NM	$204	2.72X

"Archie's Girls, Betty and Veronica"

#2	VG	$232	1.52X
#3	VG	$103	1.12X
#4	VG	$62	67%
#5	FN+	$91	66%
#7	VG	$85	1.06X
#8	VG	$70	88%

"Archie's Pal, Jughead"

#2	FN+	$224	1.14X
#3	FN+	$52	43%
#4	FN+	$64	53%
#5	VG	$39	49%

Batman

#121	FN	$84	61%
#121	VG	$50	54%
#138	FN	$65	1.03X
#155	FN	$79	84%
#171	VG	$46	62%
#181	FN	$54	1.06X

Detective

#240	VG	$48	60%
#246	FN	$50	50%
#256	FN	$50	50%
#266	FN	$51	65%
#267	FN	$48	60%
#269	FN	$51	65%
#280	FN	$46	73%
#298	FN	$52	69%

Donald Duck

#58	VF/NM	$36	73%
#60	VF	$63	50%
#71	VF/NM	$33	73%
#77	NM	$46	92%
#79	NM-	$26	47%
#80	VF/NM	$21	53%
#82	NM-	$24	47%
#89	VF/NM	$16	39%
#100	NM	$39	78%
#101	NM	$21	59%
#107	NM	$26	74%

Ellery Queen (Ziff Davis)

#1	FN	$140	1.01X

Eternals

#1	NM-	$8	47%

Famous Funnies

#87	VG	$16	52%

Fantastic Four

#2	FN	$820	92%
#3	VG	$265	66%
#5	GD	$300	1.21X
#6	GD-	$196	1.19X
#17	FN	$225	2.4X%

Gay Comics

#1	VF	$248	83%
#18	VG	$75	1.21X
#22	FN	$44	59%
#37	GD	$19	1.9X
#40	VG	$25	1.39X

Green Lantern

#1	VF-	$710	35%
#45	NM-	$100	55%
#59	NM-	$462	1.78X

Incredible Hulk

#1	FN	"$1625"	85%
#2	FN	$330	55%
#3	VG	$200	75%
#5	FN	$345	Guide

Justice League of America

#3	GD	$40	72%
#6	GD	$27	93%
#21	VG	$28	43%
#26	NM-	$50	30%
#27	NM-	$50	30%

Lois Lane

#3	VG	$45	45%
#6	FN	$36	36%
#11	VG	$22	65%

Looney Tunes

#79	GD	$43	5.3X
#90	VF	$83	1.66X
#105	GD	$53	8.8X

Marvel Premiere

#15	VF	$45	85%

Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars

#8	NM	$15	54%

Marvel Two-in-One

#7	NM	$6	50%
#8	NM	$9	64%
#10	NM	$4	35%

Showcase

#23	FN	$230	63%
#23	GD	$67	55%
#24	FN	$270	74%

Tales To Astonish

#27	FN	$300	37%
#27	GD	$175	64%
#35	FN	$200	54%
#36	VG	$74	70%
#37	VF	$91	33%
#59	VF	$105	84%

Tarzan (Marvel)

#1	NM	$5	63%

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

#2(1st print)	NM	$50	91%

Terrifying Tales

#11	FN	$76	51%

Thrilling Adventures in Stamps

#8	VG	$122	84%

Tomb of Terror

#9	FN	$36	50%

Twilight Zone

#92	VF/NM	$12	1.33X

Two-Gun Kid

#57	VF	$36	86%

Ultimates

#2	NM	$15	5X

Uncanny Tales

#16	VG	$28	50%

Uncle Scrooge

#3(FC495)	FN	$55	42%
#51	VF/NM	$66	76%
#52	VF/NM	$51	59%
#53	NM-	$55	50%
#54	VF/NM	$47	53%
#55	VF	$33	52%
#56	NM	$72	65%
#57	NM	$48	43%

Wonder Woman

#103	VG	$48	1.14X
#104	VG	$66	1.57X
#105	GD	$114	1.31X
#106	GD	$51	2.42X
#107	FN	$151	1.73X
#108	FN	$54	86%
#109	FN	$54	86%
#110	VG	$52	1.23X
#111	FN	$73	1.52X
#112	VG	$50	1.56X

World of Suspense

#4	VG	$10	25%

World's Finest

#96	VG	$16	38%

World's Finest

#99	VG	$31	74%
#100	VG	$39	54%
#101	VG	$21	70%
#102	FN	$21	47%

X-Men

#1	FN	"$1225"	70%
#3	VF	$355	72%
#9	NM-	$355	79%
#26	VG+	$30	1.23X
#49	VG	$19	1.19X
#68	VF	$22	51%
#69	FN	$22	51%
#70	VF	$27	63%
#72	VF	$40	95%
#74	VF	$24	78%
#76	VF	$26	87%
#80	FN+	$16	1.29X
#84	VF	$29	96%
#94	FN+	$319	1.83X
#95	NM	$85	39%
#110	NM	$22	31%
#114	NM	$35	54%
#125	NM	$20	40%
#129	FN+	$25	1.67X
#133	NM	$30	66%
#140	VF+	$20	65%
#212	NM	$22	92%
#248	NM	$25	1.13X

John Hauser
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2003 was a breakout year. There have been tons of great comics, pulps, art and Big Little Books for sale all year—enough material to keep any collector happy. The market has been up and down all year. At the end of 2003 it seems to have hit its peak! The market has changed over the years. No longer is the *Comic Buyers Guide* a force in the market place. High ad prices and competition from eBay have reduced their ads for comics to almost nothing.

CGC began with humble beginnings and in a short time they have become the dominating factor in market prices. CGC graded comics are hitting new records daily. Comics from the 1970s can no longer be ignored as eager collectors pay higher and higher prices.

Many old time collectors are now certifying and selling their cherished high grade collectibles. These collectors figure these comics can be replaced with lower-grade comics with little or no trouble—resulting in a tidy cash flow that can be spent on many other interesting collectibles.

Recently high grade non-certified comics have begun to sell for over *Guide* prices.

Those crazy prices for CGC 9.6 NM+ graded comics are finally starting to raise the prices on non-CGC graded VFs and NMs. People have finally figured out that if they are worth that much in a little plastic holder they must be still be worth more than *Guide* if they are not sealed inside a little plastic holder.

Ebay allows anyone with a little time to become a dealer. While this has been great for collectors it is tough for dealers. I have found the supply of comics available to me for resale to be drying up. On the plus side dealers can now deal in anything, not just comics. Ebay is the biggest store in the world and we can all participate. Almost any comic can find a buyer at some price on eBay. It seems most collectors just want to get affordable reading copies of these comics. Let's not forget these items were made to be read and enjoyed.

We have had great luck selling art books, graphic novels, newspaper reprint books, Treasuries and just about any oddity on eBay. Less impressive are sales on average common comics in VG. About the only problem we've experienced with Internet sales on eBay is non-paying bidders. These buyers don't last long on eBay as they cost eBay money in fees. Ebay takes this loss of revenue very seriously and they don't hesitate to suspend bidders that are chronic in this behavior.

The local comic conventions continue to be a great place to buy and sell comics. There are always bargains to be had. The collectors still gather in an attempt to find comics to fill in that gap in their collection. There are still collectors out there that enjoy picking out their comics in person. At conventions they can examine the comics for sale—sniff the pages and decide if they are worth buying and taking home.

2004 has begun with a bang. It will be interesting to see how it goes.

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Greetings once again from New Jersey! Our year-end shows were a little atypical due to the weather. A nasty snowstorm hit the day of our Clifton show in December, and more than half of the dealers were unable to make it. We ran the show with the handful of dealers that could, and about 20 customers actually did come. Some from more than an hour away! It just goes to show that even though there may be fewer collectors than our hobby had ten years ago those that have stuck it out are extraordinarily devoted! And those customers that missed Clifton all apparently came to our Wayne show two weeks later.

So...what's selling? DC is still the king as far as hot new back issues are concerned. Marvel certainly has many strong sellers, but many of the decisions they have made over the past few years have made it difficult for them to attract new readers. Sales of Crossgen's books have been on the downslide, and once they announced their slash and burn publication schedule, virtually their entire line has been relegated to the bargain bins.

When it comes to Bronze Age and earlier nearly everything sells—superhero, humor, kiddie comics, romance, horror, crime and science fiction all move nicely. Westerns, TV-related comics and Classics Illustrated, while not dead, are slow. High grade collectors are getting tough to satisfy. Most do not want to pay premium CGC prices, since they actually want to look inside their comics, but it's getting tougher for the average dealer to restock high grade due to the fan press's obsession with slabbed comics. I have had several regular customers (who know comics and know grading) show me NM 9.4 CGC comics that they purchased on eBay (which are, of course, non-returnable) with tears, rubbed or blunted corners, creasing, or spine shift. It would be impossible to sell these books "raw" as NM with these flaws, yet the "investors" who gobble up so many of the higher grade CGC books in auctions (and then just turn around and relist them) do not have a clue. This too shall pass...

Now, on to a sampling of sales from various dealers:

Golden Age to Atom Age: *Action* #186 FN $120; *Batman* #58 VG (CGC 4.0) $150; *Boy Commandos* #16 VG $50; *Captain Marvel Story Book* #3 FN $125; *Charlie Chan* #2 (Charlton) FN $150; *Exciting Comics* #12 VF $500; *Gangbusters* #2 FN $150; *Mad* #4 VG $145; *Military Comics* #41 VG $90; *Peter Porkchops* #1 VG/FN $80; *Private Detective* (Pulp with Comic Story) Mar 1949 VG/FN $45; *Sensation* #61 VG $75; *Tor* (St John) #5 FN $20.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #3 VG $500, #77 VG+ $15; *Astro Boy* #1 VG+ $100; *Brave & Bold* #28 VG+ $800; *Fantastic Four* #21 FN $75, #45 VF $75, #48 VG+ $150, #49 VF $200, #50 VF+ $200, #67 VF $50, #86 VF+ $35, #115 VF/NM $22; *Laurel and Hardy* #1 (Gold Key) FN $20; *Sub-Mariner* #14 VF/NM $30; *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* #24 VG $27; *Tales From the Crypt* (PB) VG- $15; *Vault of Horror* (PB) VG+ $15; *X-Men* #14 FN+ $70.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #100 NM $300, #101 VF- $80, #129 VG $50, FN $70, VF+ $200; *Avengers* #93 VF/NM $75, #100 VF $50; *Batman* #251 VF- $35, #255 VF/NM $50; *DC 100 Page Super Spectacular* #5 GD $50, #6 GD (entire spine taped) $15; *DC Special Series* #13 (Sgt. Rock) NM $25; *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* #1 VF/NM $35, #2 NM $40, #5 FN $5; *Dennis the Menace* #7 (Marvel-Spiderkid story) NM $25; *Dennis the Menace and The Bible Kids* #4 VF/NM $15; *Doc Savage* (Magazine) #8 NM $15; *Incredible Hulk* #180 NM-$150, #181 FN $200; *Man-Thing* #1 (1st series) VF/NM $25, #2 NM $15; *Superman* #200 VF/NM $50, #233 NM $100, #300 NM $20; *Wonder Woman* #177 VF $40, #178 VF/NM $60, #199 NM $75, #200 NM $100.

Modern Age: *After Apocalypse* #1 (Early, perhaps 1st Bagley art?) NM $30; *Amazing Spider-Man* #36 NM+ $20; *Batman* #608 (1st) NM $15; *Cerebus Jam* #1 NM $20; *Daredevil* #1 NM- $15, #2 NM $10; *JLA* #1 NM $15, #2 NM $10, #3 NM $10; *Hellblazer* #1 NM $20; *Jinx* (Caliber) #1 NM- $15, #3 VF/NM $10; *Next Men* #21 VF/NM $25; *Powers* #1 NM $15, #2 NM $15; *Swamp Thing* #37 (1st Hellblazer) NM $25; *Ultimates* #1 NM $5; *Ultimate Spider-Man* #34 NM $10.

Jamie Newbold

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Christmas is just past us and the act of shipping packages grows easier. Or, at least it's easier if you understand the process/system. As a frequent eBay seller I know how frustrated buyers are with seemingly inflated shipping costs attached to purchases. Especially our overseas customers. We've been shipping across the planet on a regular basis for about six years. We slowly figured out what systems work best for domestic and international shipping. In the US, Priority Mail seems to be the preferred method. Parcel Post or First Class tie for second and Media Mail, when applicable, comes in third for choices agreed upon by sellers and buyers. At the low-to-mid range comic sales spectrum ($1,000 or less) we use the Post Office. Most of my business contacts use this system as well. USPS maintains an unrelenting image as being unreliable, as compared to UPS and the others. I find this not to be true. After six years of shipping several thousand packages and envelopes, I can count the number of those gone missing on one hand. That includes overseas shipments to places like Tasmania, Singapore and Chile.

Damages, however, are a different matter. All of the shipping firms, USPS included, have handled packages to and from my store with less than concerned care. Customers routinely ask that we over pack shipments to ensure that they will survive the journey without damage. Insurance purchased at the Post Office is the only effective way to protect an investment sent through the mail.

I'd like to address overseas shipping just a bit more. The Post Office offers several ways to get packages across water and borders. There are two consistent forms of international shipping that we offer our customers as a choice—"Surface"(Economy) and "Air"—for them to make when deciding how much to invest in shipping for particular items and how bad they want those items.

The rates are fair for surface shipping if the weight is light. The same holds true for shipments by air, which is about double. Heavier weights, say over four pounds, and the skyrocketing costs are enough to change the mind of a website or eBay customer. The Post Office offers a solution in the form of "M", or Mail Bag. At weights over 11 pounds the Post Office will pack your boxes in labeled canvas bags for any destination worldwide (with some restrictions). I've shaved off as much as 2/3 the cost by shipping heavy packages by M Bag.

As a business I add the cost of fuel and package material to my shipping costs. This overhead is defined as "handling" costs by my store and by others. We all have horror stories of unscrupulous dealers overcharging buyers through the mail to squeeze out a few more bucks. Handling costs are perfectly acceptable increases to the prices buyers pay for items. Just disclose what those handling costs are paying for if a curious customer requires explanation.

We are seeing mail sales bring in larger percentages of our monthly gross sales. Website activity, print ads and eBay are seeing to that. Purchasing the stuff is the no-brainer choice the buyers have to make. Fear it won't reach them or cost too much to ship will hold them back.

Golden Age: *Archie Comics* #30 FN-$115; *Archie Annual* #3 VG/F $125; *Batman* #9 Restored $800; *Bugs Bunny* FC #200 F/VF $58; *Felix the Cat* #37 FA/GD $135; *Fox and the Crow* #2 FN+ $175; *Looney Tunes* #4 FN $375, #8 FN-$200, #10 FN+ $325; *Mickey Mouse* FC #79 VG/F $250; *Pogo* #15 FN $50, #16 F/VF $87; *Pogo Parade* #1 VF $290.

Silver Age: *Amazing Adult Fantasy* #10 FN- $110, #11 VG/F $100; *Amazing Spider-Man* #5 VG/F $315, #15 FN $200, #27 FN+ $125, #33 VF $175, #39 CGC 8.0 $500, #42 F/VF $90, #79 VF+ $50. #98 VF/NM $125; *Avengers* #1 VG+ $480; *Beany and Cecil* #1 FN $45; *Boris Karloff Thriller* #1 VF $50; *Captain America* #110 VF/NM $60; *Conan* #1 FN $72; *Fantastic Four* #16 FN- $94, #70 NM- $70, #71 NM- $60, #85 NM $50, #95 VF/NM $35; *Flash* #106 VG $265; *Jetsons* #30 NM $50; *Justice League of America* #60 VF $46; *Metal Men* #12 F/VF $30; *Monsters on the Prowl* #9 VF/NM $25; *Rocky and His Friends* FC #1128 VF+ $325, FC #1275 NM $300; *Showcase* #24 GD $118; *Silver Surfer* #4 VF- $255, #17 NM $82; *Strange Tales* #105 FN+ $112, #106 FN+ $86; *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* #7 VG $66, #10 VG/F $68; *Tales To Astonish* #14 VG/F $63; *X-Men* #1 VG $1,100, #38 VF/NM $115.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #113 VF/NM $50, #116 NM $80; *Daredevil* #158 F/VF $32; *Defenders* #1 F/VF $47; *Detective Comics* #468 NM $28, #471 NM $28; *Incredible Hulk* #181 VF $750, #200 NM $33; *Invaders* #1 NM $49; *Marvel Spotlight* (Ghost Rider) #8 NM- $45; *Vampirella* #78 NM- $30.

Modern Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #238 NM $77, #300 VF+ $55; *Fantastic*

Four (Vol. 2) #1 Gold Signature Ed. NM $40; *Incredible Hulk* #340 NM $35; *Origin* #1 NM $35; *Spider-Man* (1990) #1 Platinum Ed. CGC 8.0 $100; *Ultimate Spider-Man* #3 NM $20.

Scott McAdam

Treasures of Youth
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Hello again from rainy Texas. For me, the New Year has not brought any real optimism for the comic book industry. After many years of being a full-time comic dealer in California's San Francisco Bay Area and then moving to the Dallas Metroplex, the dynamics of my sales has changed drastically. The ability to buy has diminished greatly without the benefits of the advertising that I had in phone books and local free ad papers and also just the network of people that I had from being in the same area for 25+ years in the comic book industry.

Ebay has become a buyer's paradise for most low-grade or common items going for far less than "retail value." Now retail value is a relative term because, as we all know, things are only worth what the market will bear in any category of sales, collectibles or other things. With so many sellers on eBay being flea market, estate sale and attic pickers there can be many bargains for collectors. I list stuff on eBay for 40-50% of *Guide* starting price and have many, many items go without a bid for the week that they sit there. Now that does not necessarily mean that no one wants it or will pay for it, but it does often mean that eBay has grown so large that items can easily get lost in the shuffle. With a relist I sell many things the next time for either my Buy It Now price, over the minimum or right at minimum bid.

With 28+ years of experience in the comics field I have long ago learned to be more worried about what I have paid for a comic in comparison to what I get for it, rather than what it is "worth by *Guide*."

A few sales recently have been Charlton: *The Thing* #3 VG- $75 [Buy It Now]; *Giant-size Superheroes* #1 CGC 9.0 $49.99 [minimum bid at less than *Guide*]; *Silver Surfer* #2 VF- $50; I sold a good batch of misc. Classics Illustrated and comics to a collector in Austin, Texas for 70% of *Guide*, mostly first prints from #60-120.

I have been lucky enough to be given the remaining artwork of the late, great Fred Guardineer by his family through family friend and physician, Dr. Todd Severin [oft times contributor to *CBM*] and have sold a few 1930s sports pulp illustrations for around $200 each and a couple of pages from a Lev Gleason crime story for $100 each. I recently sold a page from my collection by Carmine Infantino from *Strange Adventures* #144 for $450.

Nick Beckett, John Skoulides

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OK, Christmas has come and gone, and with it a large chunk of stock. Usually, this time of year is slow with little customer interest and fewer sales. However, this year the London show on 4th January was our best ever with sales figures going through the roof. I'm sure it helped that we were running a 20% off discount offer, but that still doesn't explain the levels of business. Obviously a lot of folks had Christmas money burning a hole in their pocket!

CGC books made up a sizeable chunk of the total, in pounds if not in number of books. As is always the case, Spideys were popular with us selling lovely 8.5 copies of #16, 17 and 25 all to the same guy. Also selling through well were *Fantastic Fours*, after a period of relative quiet, and one buyer took six books sub #60, including a beautiful VF/NM copy of #30 which we were sorry to see go.

However, on the "almost-without-a-pulse" end of the scale, we have the "film" books, *Daredevil* and *Hulk*. These we cannot even give away, and believe you me, we've tried! This sort of thing is the bane of dealers, and at Comicana we try to do our part by *not* hyping the books in the first place. Sure, there's a short-term killing to be made, but you always run the risk of being left with boxes full of the stuff and not a buyer in sight. Additionally, if we are going to avoid a boom and bust cycle similar to the one we saw in the early '90s, it's entirely down to us, the dealers. Stop thinking of the short-term gain and start selling stuff ethically. When Spidey prices are going up, go with it, as that book will never be unpopular. When DD prices are doing the same, back off, charge your customers a realistic long-term price and remind yourself that you want the same people to be paying your bills next year and the year after that, not just this month. Give your customers good advice and realistic pricing, based on the true long-term value of whatever it is they wish to buy.

On with some sale prices: *Amazing Spider-Man* #16 VF+ (CGC) $600, #47 VF+ $105; *Fantastic Four* #30 VF/NM $160; *Incredible Hulk* #180 NM- $175; *Silver Surfer* #4 VF+ (CGC) $380; *Uncanny X-Men* #105 NM- (CGC) $72.

Empire Collectibles

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We've had a good couple of months here despite sporadic sales (we are entirely web-based and have not run any print advertising as yet). Pulps, Golden Age and Silver Age dominate our sales, with Bronze trailing closely. We've also had an interesting mix of overseas orders with domestic orders at a ratio of 50/50. The high grade sales are mostly filling the domestic orders, while lower and mid grades sell well for overseas orders, as long as they are key books or first issues. Here are some of our noteworthy sales:

Overseas sales: *Flash Gordon's Strange Adventure Magazine* (Pulp) CGC 6.0 "Lost Valley" $2,000 sold to Japan; rare one-shot comic size pulp magazine *Millie the Model* #1 FN (Raw) 6.0 $400 sold to a dealer in England; *Two-Gun Kid* #1 FN (Raw) 6.0 $325; *Sun Girl* #1 FN (Raw) 6.0 $475; and *Miss America Comics* #1 G/VG (Raw) 3.0 $250 sold to Australia.

Domestic US/Canada sales: *Vault of Horror* #12 (#1) CGC VG 4.0 $925 US Buyer; *Showcase* #37 (1st Metal Men) NM- (Raw) 9.2 $925 US Buyer; *Captain America* #100 CGC NM- 9.2 $525 US Buyer; *Forever People* #1 NM- (Raw) 9.2

[continued on page 76]

BAT MAN

NEAL ADAMS

1968-1974

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE INTERVIEW:

NEAL ADAMS VOLUME 2

by Michael Kronenberg

In the second part of my interview with legendary Batman artist Neal Adams, we discussed each of his key issues of Brave and The Bold, Detective Comics, *and* Batman. *Though his impact on the character was immediate, his interpretation did follow a progression over those six years. Adams drew his last issue of* Batman *in 1974, but his influence is still being felt and discussed. To this day, one of the most anticipated events in comics is Neal Adams returning to draw Batman. When and will it ever happen?*

CBM: I wanted to talk about some of the individual issues. The first *Brave and the Bold* that you did…

Adams: Which was it?

CBM: #79, with Deadman, "Track of the Hook."

Adams: Ah, see, that's how you hook me.

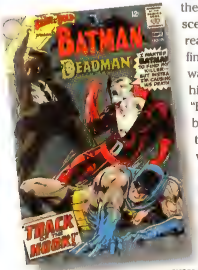
CBM: From the outset, you established a tone that this was going to be a different Batman. He was going to be darker, grittier, more realistic. However, this is not established in the story. So, you were kind of off on your own. You decided to just do this on your own. What was the reaction of Murray Boltinoff and Bob Haney?

Adams: Well, Murray is kind of a political fellow. He was never really given a tremendous amount of respect. I know other people will say at DC that he was. I, personally, have a lot of respect for him, and I enjoyed working for him. He allowed a greater amount of freedom, but I think respectfully. I first worked with him, I think, on *Bob Hope* and *Jerry Lewis*. We had a good time, you know. It was no pressure, great guy. Julie Schwartz wouldn't let me do Batman. I mean, I did other stuff for Julie. I wrote and drew The Spectre, some short stories. But I felt that they were missing the boat on Batman, and since I wanted to do it, and Murray had seen that I was basically getting a lot of attention at that point at DC…

CBM: Because of your covers?

Adams: And Deadman…Well, you know, if you do stuff that gets attention… Murray recognized that and I told him I'd love

to work on *Brave and the Bold*. He was only too happy to have me. I think it's to his credit that he was nice enough to let me take the bull by the horns when I said, "I think, if you just let me do it the way I want to do it, I'll make up some changes, they really won't be exhibited in the script, but I'd let all these scenes take place at night. That's really all I want to do. Because I find it hard to think of Batman walking around in the daytime in his underwear." And so he said, "Fine, no problem." That was basically our discussion. So that's essentially what happened with Batman. He became slightly more mysterious. He hung around at night and didn't hang around in the daytime. It didn't really affect the story.

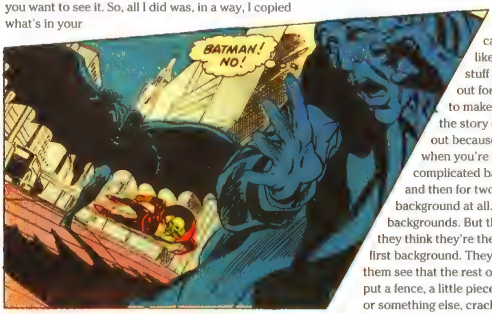


CBM: No, it didn't, but the way Batman looked was like nothing else anybody had seen before.

Adams: Well, but you know it's in your mind's eye. It's the way you want to see it. One of the reasons that you're saying that is because, in your mind's eye, that's the way you want to see it. So, all I did was, in a way, I copied what's in your mind. And also, remember I had learned. I'm a skilled artist. You know, I'm not the greatest artist in the world, but I'm a skilled artist. I know how cloth moves, and there's a lot of stuff that if you pick it up along the way and you are a person who is sufficiently interested, you can exhibit many, many skills and they don't have to be there all at the same time. You can play with them. Comic books are like a shorthand—the art is also in the stuff you leave out. And you leave stuff out for many reasons. You leave stuff out to make a living. You leave stuff out because the story can be told simpler. You leave stuff out because people think you're doing one thing when you're doing another. For example, I'll do a complicated background as an establishing shot, and then for two or three pages I'll do nearly no background at all. People think that it's loaded with backgrounds. But they're not there. The reason that they think they're there is they retain the image of that first background. They've got it in their mind, and I don't let them see that the rest of the backgrounds aren't there. I'll put a fence, a little piece of a fence or a little piece of a step or something else, crack of the street, so they'll know. They've registered that background, they know what it looks like, and any part that I show them relates to it specifically so they think they're seeing that background through the following pages. Well, I am not fooling them, I'm simply working with their mind to allow them/us to travel the same path. So there are people that say, "Oh, Neal does these great

NOW ACROSS THE GOTHAM NIGHT SWINGS ITS FAMOUS GUARDIAN—AIN'T HE? A STEAL COMMUNICATE...
"HIS IS CARLETON KEANE, I CANNOT TO ALL DECENT CITIZENS TO JOIN ME CRUSADE TO RID OUR CITY OF CORRUPTION, CRIME, AND INCIDENTALS LIKE COMMISSIONER GORDON AND BATMAN!"
HOW! KAINE'S SURE SHAKIN' UP THIS BURG AND SO ARE THE COPS! BUT, WHAT'S WITH BATMAN? WHERE'S HE HEADIN'?

Not only did Adams' Batman become darker and more mysterious, but sleeker and much more athletic (*Brave and The Bold* #79).



Neal told *Brave and The Bold* editor Murray Boltinoff "I think, if you just let me do it the way I want to do it, I'll make up some changes, they really won't be exhibited in the script, but I'd let all these scenes take place at night. That's really all I want to do. Because I find it hard to think of Batman walking around in the daytime in his underwear." In an example (above), from Neal's first issue (*Brave and The Bold* #79), Batman appears like he had not for nearly 30 years.

All art © 2004 DC Comics. Batman ™ & © DC Comics.

backgrounds. They're very complicated and have all this stuff in them. There are other people who work much harder on backgrounds than I do. It's a trick of the mind. It's the things you leave out as much as the things you put in that make a picture what it is. I'm not just talking about negative space, I'm talking about the things you leave out. For example, when you're looking at a drawing, your eye tends to focus on certain parts of the drawing. It will not go to other parts of the drawing. When it goes there, it just sweeps by. They've performed experiments where they've attached lasers to the eye somehow, and you see the laser track around the painting or a drawing. And you'll see it will concentrate on certain areas and it will swiftly go by another area. Well, if you know that, then you can focus your attention on that area that you know your eye is going to go to. You don't necessarily short the other area, but you don't have to put as much attention to it. So, somebody will look at a face that I'll do, and it will seem as though you're looking right into that person's eyes. Because the eyes are done in such a way that you can look at them and see an eye, look into that person's face. The rest of the face might have stubble on it or whatever, but you're looking at the eyes. One good example is this drug addict. You don't actually look into his eyes, and the Green Lantern/Green Arrow face, but when he opens his eyes and looks out, his eyes almost look watery. We almost see water in the eyes. How can there be water in his eyes? It's line drawing. Scenes like that are not tricks, they're skills. What is the border between tricks and skills? I don't know.

In Neal's second issue of *Brave and The Bold*, his page layouts became bolder and more experimental. He called them "Chaotic."

CBM: I'm not sure everyone appreciates the fact that comic book fans had never seen anything like that before.

Adams: And in a way, everyone soon tried to do it [laughs].

CBM: You were, of course, copied, but the angles that you chose, the way you drew, the way you laid out the page, I felt it was kind of like watching an Orson Welles film. To many of us, it was shocking, beautiful and inspiring. Like you said, people started copying it. It was the realization of what the medium could be, it could be

THAT FIGURES! DALKO HAD THE "CONTRACT" TO KILL ACE BRANIGAN FOR MUSCLING IN ON THE HUNCKING RACKET!
SHORTLY, AS THE BAT-SIGNAL CALLS GOTHAM'S GUARDIAN TO COMMISSIONER GORDON'S OFFICE...
BIG AL DALKO: BATMAN--HE'S ASKING FOR POLICE PROTECTION!
WHAT ABOUT CREEPER?
THEN ALL BRANIGAN'S BOYS ARE OUT TO EVEN THE SCORE! DALKO SAYS A KILLER'S BEEN SNOOPING AROUND HIS DIGS! CAN YOU GET OUT THERE AND PROTECT HIM?
FORGET THAT FOR A WHILE! WE'VE GOT TO STOP A GANG WAR FROM STARTING!
CHECK, COMMISSIONER! I'LL PROTECT DALKO AS IF HE WERE AN HONEST PILLAR OF GOTHAM CITY SOCIETY!
I'VE GOT A HUNCH CREEPER BETTER BE WITH ME ON THIS--GOOD THING I GAVE HIM A BAT-RADIO!
BATMAN TO CREEPER... BATMAN TO CREEPER!

CBM: In the next *Brave and the Bold*, I believe it's the one with the Creeper, your layouts became even bolder and more imaginative.

Adams: Chaotic. I did some of my worst layouts in there.

Neal's preliminary sketch (above) for the splash page of *Brave and The Bold* #86 (right).

almost filmlike. How much were you influenced at that point in your career by film?

Adams: You have to remember, in some weird kind of way, almost all directors read comic books and comic strips. One person can draw a comic book in a month. The question really is, how much are films affected by comic books or comic strips? I would say greatly, because I can do in thirty pages, in a month, what it would now take $40,000,000 to make the same story as a movie. Take $40,000,000—now it's $100,000,000. It would take $100,000,000 to do the same thing on film. I can do it in a month in my apartment. That's a big thing. People don't realize the potential for comic books is greater than the potential of almost any medium ever. There's nothing better. So, other people had already done the Orson Wellesian quality: Alex Toth and other people like that. This was something beyond that. This was something to inspire new directors to go, "Whoa, there's something going on here." If you study the stuff, you actually will find that some directors pick up ideas from these comic books. Certainly Stuart Gordon, when he did *Warp*, the stage play, he admitted that he was reading *The Avengers*, the few issues of *Avengers* that I did that inspired the *Warp* show. That, and Jack Kirby. There's a tendency for some of these people not to necessarily give credit. Every once in a while, you get credit. Vittorio de Sica, I am told, apocryphal story, came to America after he had done whatever great film he had done.

CBM: *The Bicycle Thief*.

Adams: Could be. And took the comic strip artists that worked for King Features Syndicate out to lunch and thanked them for being his inspiration. Frederico Fellini, who was a cartoonist himself, was inspirited much by cartoonists and comics.

CBM: I think Welles also had admitted that.

Adams: I think George Lucas and I think…

CBM: Spielberg also.

Adams: I don't see that influence not being there. And I think that, to one extent or another, the legacy of comic books is great only when the creators remember that their position is to be the leader and not the follower. When they think they're the follower, to be influenced by film, that's the mistake. The right thing to do is to take the chance, to experiment, to mess with people's minds. To let people get mad at you, upset by you or inspired by you or whatever it is, to do those things that nobody else will do, because you

Another example of Neal's thumbnail and finished page from *Brave and The Bold* #86.

SGT. ROCK
THIS IS BATMAN! I USUALLY LET OTHERS TELL YOU MY STORIES, BUT THIS ONE'S A LITTLE SPECIAL. IT CONCERNS A
AND IT STARTED ONE NIGHT IN THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM...
HAHAHAH...DID YOU HEAR A NOISE BACK THERE?

Splash page to "The Angel, The Rock and The Cowl" (*Brave and The Bold* #84). Bob Haney's wonderful story retells the first meeting of Batman and Sgt. Rock. Much of the action takes place in flashback during World War II.

have the tools to do it. You can make the whole $80,000,000 movie in one month on paper. What are your marching orders? Mess with them. That's our marching orders. Make them crazy. Make a man into a bat, not a bat into man.

CBM: The second Deadman story in *Brave and the Bold*, there's no writing credit in that. Did you write that one?

Adams: No. I'm amazed that there's no writing credit in there. I'm quite sure it's Bob Haney. Bob Haney, by the way, if you read those stories, you'll find massive storytelling in there. They almost seem twice as long as a regular Batman story. And he gets no damned credit.

NEXT DAY, AT NUMBER 10, DOWNING STREET...
HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES GREATLY THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE BROUGHT, MR. WAYNE! YOUR LATE FRIEND, DIGBY PALMER... WAS ONE OF OUR AGENTS MAKING SECRET PARA-DROPS INTO OCCUPIED FRANCE!

Iconic fiction meets iconic history: Winston Churchill confers with Allied secret agent Bruce Wayne from *Brave and The Bold* #84.

CBM: I actually am a fan of his and I was going to say the Sgt. Rock story that the two of you did is my favorite. Just having Batman fight the Nazis, that was wonderful.

Adams: And the stories are so rich and so full. They just go from here to there to there to here. Sometimes he went off the track. One particular time, I think he had a statue smuggled to America and crimes were committed because it was really gold underneath it. I forget which story, but, as far as I know, it's not illegal to bring gold into America. But, I've done other Batman stories, and your readers can make the comparison. Read the Denny O'Neil stories. The Denny O'Neil stories are single ideas dramatically done and

A young Batman battles the Nazis in his distinct style from *Brave and The Bold* #84.

very good. You read a Bob Haney story; it's like you've read three Denny O'Neil stories. They intertwine with themselves. And I applaud Denny, but I'd really like

Contrary to what most people think, the bearded villain from "Red Water, Crimson Death" (*Brave and The Bold* #93) was not Neal, but but his school friend Ken Stitzer.

to remind people that Bob Haney did a tremendous job. Tremendous job. I loved working on those things.

CBM: Yeah, I agree. All those stories were great. In the last *Brave and the Bold* story that you did with O'Neil, "Red Water, Crimson Death," did you draw yourself in as the villain?

Adams: No, in fact, that was my buddy from school, Ken Stitzer. We went to school together and we became fast friends for a number of years until we both got married and had kids. Only then did we drift apart. During that time, I took photographs of him for a couple of my stories. One of them appears in *Creepy* or *Eerie*, about a voodoo doll. I did the whole story in pencil and the villain is Ken, and he is also the character in that story. We look nothing alike. But the story is passed on.

CBM: I think it's the goatee that you had at one time. On to *Detective Comics*. What was your opinion of DC's decision to have Batman go solo and move him away from Wayne Manor and into a penthouse?

Adams: Oh, did they do that? [laughs] I don't think they did. You're lying, right? No, don't kid me like that. I'm a serious guy, and I take these things seriously. I don't think they did that. Alright, c'mon. You know they didn't do that. C'mon.

CBM: Good. "The Secret of the Waiting Graves," this whole idea of changing…

Adams: It's not even a Batman story.

CBM: It's a horror story.

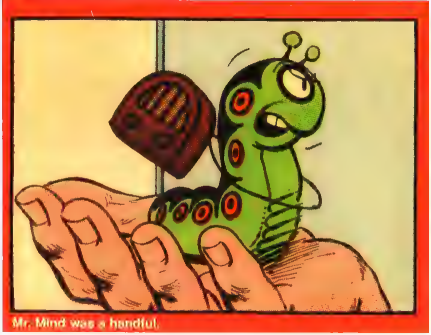
Adams: It's a horror story. A surreal story.

CBM: It's great. And the point I was going to make later on is the blending of Batman and horror really hadn't been done before, and it just seems to make sense.

Adams: Well, personally, I think Denny blew that one off. I think there are the times that you accidentally do something important. When you're just knocking a story out, now maybe Denny will say differently, maybe he didn't blow that one out of his ear. I have the impression that he did. And, as I said, you do something significant and important very often when you least expect it. People will say to me, "Did you know when you were doing those covers that this cover would be this practically legendary cover?" And the truth of the matter is that I never meant it. I would put my ass into a cover, work as hard as I possibly could to make a great cover, and people totally forget it. I do another cover, like I

continued on page 54

Neal's first official Batman story was a teaming with Denny O'Neil. "The Secret of The Waiting Graves" (*Detective Comics* #395) was more of a horror story than a Batman story. In 1969 this was unusual, today however, the blending of Batman and horror is quite common.



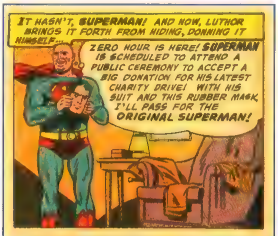
Mr. Mind was a handful.

Eminent Villains of the Golden Age

by Ron Goulart

One surefire way to judge the caliber of a super-hero is by the villainous company he or she keeps. During the initial heyday of costumed crime fighters in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the top-seeded good guys frequently battled world class bad guys. We'll be considering some of the major evildoers who challenged the likes of Superman, Batman and Captain America during the Golden Age.

It took Siegel and Shuster's Superman, comic books' first super-hero, a while to go up against a really formidable foe. In his first year on the job, he limited himself, with a few exceptions, to abusive husbands, crooked landlords, run-of-the-mill gangsters and bank robbers. But then Luthor—who possessed only one name in those distant days—came into his life and funny book villainy took a great leap forward. Slim and sporting a full head of red hair, Luthor made his debut in *Action Comics* #23 early in 1940. At the time he was limiting his practice to mad science and world domination. Eluding Superman after their initial encounter, he showed up shortly thereafter in the fourth issue of *Superman*. This time around, still a redhead, he attempted to take over Metropolis by using an earthquake machine of his own invention. The Man of Steel, who referred to Luthor as "the mad scientist who plans to dominate the Earth," thwarted his plan but the wily carrot-topped madman escaped once more. He even popped up again in another story in that same issue, attempting to take over the world using pterodactyls and giant rats. After a couple more appearances Luthor went on hiatus until late in 1941.


IT HASN'T, SUPERMAN! AND NOW, LUTHOR BRINGS IT FORTH FROM HIDING, DONNING IT HIMSELF!
ZERO HOUR IS HERE! SUPERMAN IS SCHEDULED TO ATTEND A PUBLIC CEREMONY TO ACCEPT A BIG DONATION FOR HIS LATEST CHARITY DRIVE! WITH HIS SUIT AND THIS RUBBER MASK, I'LL PASS FOR THE ORIGINAL SUPERMAN!

Luthor followed Superman through the comics ages.

Prior to the advent of Luthor, Superman had tangled a few times with a bald "mad scientific genius" known as Ultra. In his final confrontation with Superman, Ultra, having had his brain transplanted, appeared as an attractive young woman. This heady concept—with a villain carrying drag to the extreme of wearing a woman's body—and Ultra himself were soon abandoned. In *Action* #42 (Nov 1941) Luthor made a triumphant return. Dwelling in a sky city high above Metropolis, he is now a chunky baldheaded fellow who looks very much like an Ultra who's been overdoing the carbs. The skin-headed Luthor attacked the city below with a disintegrating ray and used "electrical hypnosis" on Superman to compel him to do his evil bidding. Coming out of his trance on the next to the last page, Superman saved Metropolis once again but Luthor escapes. From then on Luthor returned with gratifying frequency, diversifying his villainy and becoming one of the Man of Steel's favorite foes.

In 1960 Luthor was added to the *Superboy* saga and given the first name of Lex. This no doubt to conform with the alliterative style trend set by Lois Lane, Lana Lang, etc. The villain's origins were reworked and it was revealed that he'd actually known Clark Kent since they were lads together in Smallville. In fact, Superboy caused the accident that deprived young Lex of all his hair. Ample reason for a lifelong animosity.

Another of Superman's memorable 1940s antagonists was the Prankster. While many a comic book villain was mad, he was simply wacky. An out-of-work comedian, Oswald Loomis became a clowning crook. Though obviously inspired by the Joker, he never went in for murder or crimes of violence. He was first seen in *Action Comics* #51 in the summer of 1942. John Sikela, the best of the early Joe

Shuster ghosts, drew the introductory yarn. The Prankster's most audacious caper occurred a few months later over in *Superman*, when he managed to copyright the alphabet and wouldn't let anyone use it unless they paid him a hefty fee. Another whimsical and prankish foe was Mr. Mxyztplk, who began to plague Superman in 1944. A visitor from another dimension and much given to practical jokes, he was the co-creation of ghost artist Yar Yarborough. The ubiquitous Mxyztplk appeared at about the same time in the syndicated *Superman* newspaper strip. Reintroducing himself to the Man of Steel, he explained that he hailed from "a complex outer-dimensional world." In the strip he was as prankish as he was in the funny books, but he was much nastier and kept trying to wreck trains and rob and steal. Because of his ability to disappear and reappear, he was often referred to as the little man who wasn't there. For his Earthly manifestations he appeared to be about two-feet tall and was dressed in suit, spats, vest, bowtie and derby. In later years he switched to a teebly futuristic outfit.

The costumed crimebuster who had the most colorful and inventively nasty villains lining up to do battle with him was undoubtedly Batman. The most illustrious was that prince of foul fellows, the Joker. He entered the saga by way of not one but two appearances in the inaugural issue of *Batman* early in 1940. As written by Bill Finger and depicted by Bob Kane with considerable help by Jerry Robinson, the "harlequin of hate" combined the mastermind qualities of Professor Moriarty, the fiendishness of Dr. Fu Manchu and the audacity of Groucho Marx. Like many a villain of stage, screen and fiction, the Joker delighted in warning his targets that he was going to strike and then, despite police protection and burglar alarms, striking. The most appealing thing about the white-faced Joker was his inventiveness. While his main goal in life remained loot—jewels, cash, objects of art—he was continually varying his

WITH A POWERFUL TWIST SUPERMAN LOOSES THE SUPPORTING WIRE, AND—
HELP! THE WIRE BROKE!
WELL, WELL— LOOKS AS IF SUPERMAN'S HEADED FOR A FALL! HA-HA!
The Prankster pulls a good one.

methods. On one caper he and his gang would rely on costumes and uniforms, next he'd base a series of crimes on the punch lines of old jokes. On another occasion he undertook to commit a crime a day, daring Batman and Robin to stop him. The purple-clad clown quickly became the team's most frequently fought foe. In 1940 they met him five times in *Detective Comics* and *Batman*.

Imagine!

The number of clashes dropped to three in 1941, and then climbed to an impressive eight in 1942.

Another of Batman's favorite enemies was the polite and dapper little scoundrel known as the Penguin. Dressed in tails, top hat, with one of his dangerous umbrellas (most of them were disguised weapons of one sort or another), he first waddled onto the scene in *Detective* #58 (Dec 1941). Among the other early, colorful antagonists were the complex Two-Face, the Scarecrow, the Cavalier and the Catwoman. An ambiguous femme fatale, who specialized in jewel theft, the Catwoman soon became the woman in Batman's life.

Superman's main rival in the super-hero sweepstakes, and the man who'd eventually outsell him on the newsstand, was introduced in Fawcett's *Whiz Comics* at the tail end of 1939. Created by editor-writer Bill Parker and cartoonist C.C. Beck, Captain Marvel did not take fighting crime as seriously as most of his growing number of newsstand contemporaries. The original name of Captain Marvel was to have been Captain Thunder and he was going to be the leader of a group of heroes. But the group notion and the name were discarded. Parker, perhaps with some input from his Fawcett staff, came up with a variation on the dual-identity theme. The Captain was really teenaged Billy Batson. By uttering the magic word *Shazam!*, passed on to him by an ancient and mysterious wizard who happened to reside in a long-abandoned section of subway tunnel, Billy could be transformed into the crimson-clad Captain Marvel, also known as the World's Mightiest Mortal. Despite the fact that Marvel was invulnerable, it was Billy who quietly dominated the stories. The Captain was the one who tangled with the villains, but he always returned to his true identity of Billy Batson once the danger had passed. Beck's pages were models of simplicity, clarity and design. And they were fun to look at as well as read. He based his super-hero's face on that of movie star Fred MacMurray and the costume on that of a typical soldier in light opera.

The new hero was fortunate enough to have Sivana, billed as the World's Maddest Scientist, as his first and then most frequent opponent. The small, bald bespectacled genius—who wore the same sort of white medical jacket as the neighborhood druggist Beck modeled him after—appeared in the initial story in *Whiz* and recurred with gratifying frequency. He was a clever fellow,

The Joker gets even.

cunning and intriguingly circumlocutory in his schemes. Only Rube Goldberg equaled Dr. Thadeus Bodog Sivana in constructing complex devices for performing simple chores. It often seemed, IQ point for IQ point, that he was probably smarter than Cap, whom he was fond of calling the Big Red Cheese. Personifying one of the most sacred of American ideals, Sivana didn't know the meaning of defeat. Thwarted

The two faces of evil.

time after time, he doggedly bounced back. Unlike the majority of rather dense comic book evildoers, who never tumbled to the true identities of their super-heroic opponents, Sivana realized almost at once—in the third issue of *Whiz*, in fact—that Captain Marvel and Billy Batson were one and the same. He also figured out early on that if he could prevent Billy from uttering the magic word, he wouldn't be bothered by his red-clad nemesis any longer. Clearly a man readers loved to hate, Sivana made more return engagements than any other villain in Golden Age comics.

Captain Marvel's early career was complicated by Beautia, Sivana's lovely blonde and good-hearted daughter. Erstwhile empress of Venus, she had a beauty that "affects every man she sees like a powerful drug." Not even Marvel was immune. Despite her genetic code and the fact that she grew up on Venus as ruler of a race of giant toads, Beautia was basically a nice person and she had a crush on Captain Marvel. Eventually she reformed completely and ceased to be a pawn of her evil dad. At one point she and Captain Marvel went dancing (he wore a tuxedo over his crimson and gold costume on that occasion). But, eventually, being around her caused the captain to blush and gulp, "My gosh!" More proof that he was really Billy inside.

Another entry from the Captain Marvel gallery of villains was Mr. Mind. The leader of a fiendish group known as the Monster Society of Evil (an organization possibly inspired by DC's Justice Society), he was alluded to for a while before he actually appeared. This particular mastermind was a star of a long-running continued tale that appeared in every issue of *Captain Marvel Adventures*, commencing with #22 early in 1943. The serial was entitled "The Monster Society of Evil." It was eventually revealed that Mr. Mind was an intelligent caterpillar (or possibly a silk worm) about the size of Captain Marvel's thumb, endowed with the vocabulary, cunning and nasty disposition of Sivana. Like his bald fellow bad guy, Mind soon discovered that Billy and Cap were one and the same and he, too, strived to prevent him from hollering, "Shazam!" On one occasion he swiftly spun a gag of silk around Billy's mouth. Though in later years Beck was fond of drawing the "evil worm" in fanzine memoirs, most of the art on the serial was not by him but by inferior members of his shop staff.

Captain America's main enemy was introduced in the very first issue of his magazine early in 1941. For the captain and his boy wonder sidekick, Bucky, the villain of choice was the insidious Red Skull. In the uneasy months of 1941, before the United States officially entered World War II in December, there was considerable concern in the country about homeland security and the threat of spies and saboteurs. Working directly for Hitler, and with a huge yellow swastika emblazoned on his tunic, the Red Skull

The newspaper strip Catwoman.

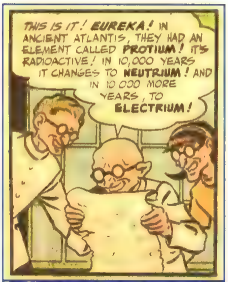
functioned as a ruthless Nazi agent. He was called the Red Skull because he wore a red skull mask. In addition to sabotage, he murdered military officials, robbed banks and plotted to take over the government of America. As did the Joker, he liked to announce to his victims in advance that he was going to kill them. Usually he sent a note and a cake box containing a red skull. Apparently nobody in the FBI thought to look for a medical supply house that had a standing order for skulls dyed crimson. Nor did they bother to safeguard any of the threatened officers. At the end of the first encounter it was revealed that the Skull was Gerald Maxon, an aircraft executive who'd sold out to Hitler. Killed by his own poison, he seems to be finished for good and all—"so ends (his) bloody career."

In keeping with the rules of the

villainy trade, however, the Red Skull came back to life in the third issue. He makes a cover appearance as well—in the first cover the gifted Alex Schomburg drew for the titles—and is shown about to shoot Captain America's secret agent friend Betty Ross out of a huge, futuristic cannon toward something designated as "the war zone." Bucky, tied to a large shell, is going to be shot number two. Fortunately Captain America has just burst into the place, which looks like a sinister observatory to save his friends from "a horrible dream." Readers had to assume that he was successful, since there's no story like this inside. Instead the Red Skull is found constructing a huge underground train with a massive drill for its nose. "In a short while the incredible American invention" snakes its way to the surface and "creates havoc…crashes great buildings…kills thousands." The Captain and Bucky succeed in tracing the Red Skull to his lair. In the explosion that destroys the super train the villain disappears and is presumed dead.

Not to worry. He returns again in #7, murdering and sabotaging as before. At the end of this tussle the Red Skull sinks into a murky river and is presumed drowned. However, he lives to fight another day. And with new identities and motivations the Red Skull continued an important part of the Captain's life for some years.

Tied with the Red Skull for the title of the Rottenest Nazi Villain was the Hitler-sponsored superman known as Captain Nazi. Wearing a green super-hero costume that included golden epaulets and a large white swastika on the chest, Captain Nazi was introduced in Fawcett's *Master Comics* #21 (Dec 1941). His blond hair was cropped short in what used to be called a heinie cut and a dueling scar was visible on his cheek. Visiting *Whiz Comics* he, along with sundry other crimes of violent sabotage, crippled young Freddy Freeman. That was a mistake, since Captain Marvel took the injured lad to Shazam and had him converted into Captain Marvel, Jr. Thereafter, the junior model got a feature


THIS IS IT! EUREKA! IN ANCIENT ATLANTIS, THEY HAD AN ELEMENT CALLED PROTIUM! IT'S RADIOACTIVE! IN 10,000 YEARS IT CHANGES TO NEUTRIUM! AND IN 10,000 MORE YEARS, TO ELECTRIUM!
Dr. Sivana and his evil offspring bedeviled Captain Marvel.

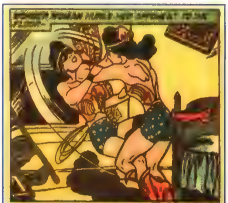
of his own back in *Master* and devoted considerable time to combating Captain Nazi. The original artist was the formidable Mac Raboy.

Wonder Woman, invented and scripted by psychologist William Moulton Marston, mixed elements of the sort of bondage and submission literature that had hitherto been sold in a plain brown wrapper with the increasingly popular elements of super-heroics. Harry Peter, who'd been a professional artist since a few years after the close of the Victorian Era, illustrated Marston's weird tales with an aplomb and gusto that fit their preoccupation with dominating women, whips, spanking, cross-dressing and quirky romance. Naturally in this milieu Wonder Woman encountered some strange villains.

Chief among them was a blonde lady who dressed up in a spotted animal skin and called herself the Cheetah. In reality she was a wealthy young deb named Priscilla Rich (like 19th Century novelists, Marston was fond of names that told you something about his characters). Priscilla first donned her fur suit in *Wonder Woman* #6 in the summer of 1943. Somewhat of a manic-depressive, she usually suited up when she was in the mood to be bad. Her crimes usually involved somebody getting tied up or chained as a side effect. Wonder Woman had many encounters with Cheetah over the years and never tired of trying to reform her. She even tried to get Cheetah to abandon crime and become a professional dancer—"Oh, Cheetah, why don't you dance and make people *love* you?" Priscilla could never quite reform and the Cheetah became the most recurrent villain of the Golden Age for Wonder Woman.

Another favorite foe was a diminutive, large-headed and bug-eyed fellow called Dr. Psycho. A mad scientist and a crackerjack hypnotist, the good doctor used his powers of hypnosis and assorted occult knacks he'd picked up to commit bizarre crimes and prey upon women. He was frequently captured by Wonder Woman and tossed in the jug only to escape and take up his old misogynistic ways. Many of Princess Diana's other antagonists were women and equally odd. Among them were a large woman named Giganta, who'd been "formerly a female gorilla," Princess Maru, alias Dr. Poison, and an off-planet blonde known simply as Evilness. Most of them were fond of bondage.

Since many of the hundreds of super-heroes of the period fought a new villain every issue, there were many more bad guys than good guys in those days. We've concentrated on some of those that were brought back by popular demand and had star quality.


Wonder Woman's strangest foe? Perhaps—her mother!

Featuring THE BLACK HOOD

TOP-NOTCH comics

NO. 10

THE STRANGE SAGA OF THE SKULL

by Will Murray

There's just something about a skull.

I guess if you absolutely had to be a sinister super-villain back in the Golden Age of Comics, concealing your true face behind an empty-eyed death's head must have been your first dark impulse.

So many did. They ranged from the famous to the obscure, like the Doc Strange's skull-visaged Faceless Phantom, and the short-lived Nazi mastermind Doc Savage battled who styled himself simply, the Skull. For two consecutive issues of Fox's *Mystery Men Comics*, the Blue Beetle fought two completely different foes who called themselves the Skull. But these colorless guys wore plain vanilla skulls.

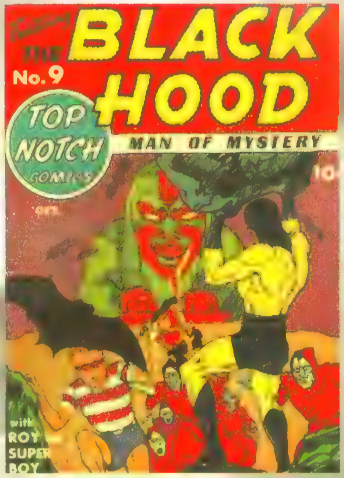
The king of them all was the Red Skull. He came out of Timely's *Captain America* in 1941. Sixty years later, he's still trying to grind Cap's bones into powder.

I'm partial to the Red Skull myself. But months before he popped up in *Captain America* #1, there appeared an earlier Skull. The MLJ Skull ranks only second to the Red Skull in sheer Golden Age skullduggery. In many ways, they were alike. Where the Red Skull specialized in Captain America-crushing, the Skull was a Black Hood basher exclusively. One wore a crimson death's head mask, while the other's hollow-orbed countenance was a sickly cadaverous green. The Red Skull preferred olive drab, the Skull was partial to severe black. Underneath, both were evil to the bone.

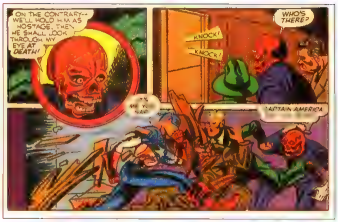
While today not nearly as famous or ill-regarded as his Timely counterpart, MLJ's Skull enjoys many distinctions the Red Skull never achieved. He was not only the first of his bony breed on the scene, but he met an unusual fate. And he appeared in the pulps as well as the comics. Since the Skull's roots are entwined with the Black Hood's, going back to the beginning is the only place to start.

MLJ's *Top-Notch Comics* was humming along featuring The Wizard until issue #9 (Oct 1940), when the Black Hood made his first appearance in a story bylined Cliff Campbell and drawn by Al Camy. Writer Harry Shorten has been often credited with creating the Black Hood, and he probably did. But Cliff Campbell was a pen name for pulp writer and editor Abner Sundell, who had been affiliated with MLJ's pulp line, variously called Blue Ribbon, Double Action and Columbia. Sundell was editing MLJ's comics line in 1940. Supposedly Cliff Campbell turned into a house name about this time. So did Abner Sundell script the Black Hood's origin, or was it Shorten? The prevailing wisdom says Shorten. One thing can be said for certain: Al Camy was really Al Camerata.

In an origin ripped out of the ragged pulps, Patrolman Kip Burland is framed for a huge jewel robbery. After catching the perpetrator in the act, the dumbstruck rookie is knocked unconscious by a red-caped human skeleton whose wizened flesh is a dull, discolored green. Burland is left literally holding the family jewels. Arrested and booted on the force, Burland takes on a new civilian identity. Most guys in his shoes would be searching for a good lawyer. Not Kip. He sets out to track down the sinister Skull.

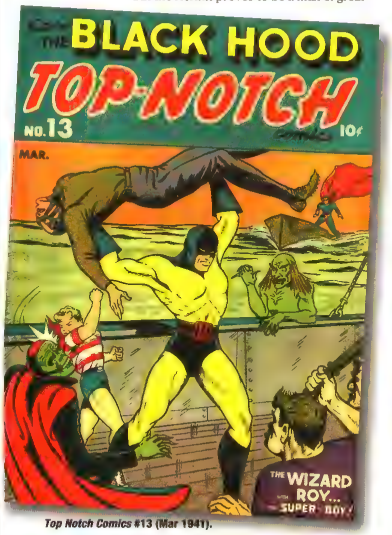


***Top Notch Comics* #9 (Oct 1940), first appearance of The Black Hood and The Skull.**

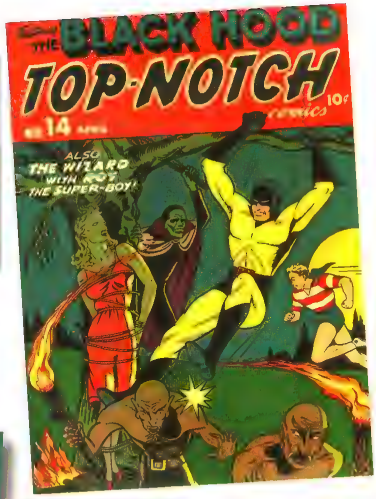

ON THE CONTRARY—WE'LL HOLD HIM AS HOSTAGE—THEN HE SHALL LOOK DEATH IN THE FACE!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
WHO'S THERE?
IT'S ME, YOU DUMB!
CAPTAIN AMERICA

Possibly influenced by MLJ's The Skull, The Red Skull first appeared months later to battle Timely's Captain America.

Unfortunately, the Skull is looking for him, too. They meet again at the scene of a warehouse robbery. Taken for a ride and riddled by lead, he's dumped from a speeding car and left for dead in the woods. There, he's found by a character known only as the Hermit. He looks like a bearded old coot, but the Hermit proves to be a man of great scientific knowledge and ability. Turns out he was once the sheriff thereabouts and, like the young rookie, was framed by the selfsame Skull.



Top Notch Comics **#13 (Mar 1941).**



Top Notch Comics #14 (Apr 1941).

After first working to restore Kip's health, the Hermit helps build his strength to supernormal proportions. Then he teaches the revitalized ex-patrolman a wealth of scientific and other knowledge in order to make him, and I quote, "The world's greatest fighter against crime!"

Finally, Kip Burland dons the striking ebony and canary yellow fighting costume of his new identity, the Black Hood. I don't know about you, but if I were embarking on a career of tracking down desperate underworld thugs, yellow is probably the last color I would be caught dead in. You might as well wear a fire-engine red bulls eye over your chest with a "Shoot Me" sign on your back.

But it seemed to have worked out just fine for the Black Hood. Despite possessing no superpowers and making a dandy target by day or night, the Man of Mystery went on to become one of MLJ's top super-heroes of the Golden Age.

He was assisted by his girlfriend, reporter Barbara Sutton of the Northville Courier (whom he met at a masquerade party the Skull crashes in that first story), and cameraman Joe Strong. He is annoyed by the Mike Axford of the strip, the Hood-hating Sergeant McGinty, Burland's former supervisor.

As for the Skull, the Black Hood unmasks him at the same

costume ball where he meets Barbara Sutton. The Skull was casing the place dressed as a woman. After turning him over to the law, Burland is left a wanted felon, not knowing how to clear his good name. Fortunately, the Skull escapes in the next issue in a wild tale called "The Return of the Skull." A running war ensues. The mortal antagonists battled their way through their first year in *Top-Notch*.

Now, heroes like Superman and Starman needed no more motivation to go after a bad guy than the fact that they were criminals operating beyond the law's reach. The Black Hood had a deeper, more realistic motivation: Only the Skull could exonerate Kip Burland. And to reclaim his life and career, Kip had to take him alive. This added realistic urgency to their frequent clashes.

The trouble with the Skull was the same trouble Captain America had with the Red Skull, Batman experienced with the Joker, and Captain Marvel suffered under Dr. Sivana. You could shoot him between the eyes, fling him off a cliff, drown him in a sewer—even attend his funeral, and he kept coming back. Somehow.

Maybe the Skull wasn't human. If they ever explained why he had a face like a rotted corpse and green hands to match, I can't find that issue. He was never seen without his mask—if it actually was a mask. If he had a life prior to becoming the Skull, it was never mentioned. He was simply...the Skull.

His preferred M.O. was to inject his victims with a poison that turned their faces a corpse-like green, just like his own. In that sense, the Skull is simply a twist on the Joker, who in those days had a myriad of ways for killing his victims so that they died laughing, their faces marked by a Jokerlike death-grimace.

If I were to guess, the Skull was probably an ordinary criminal who accidentally injected himself with his own terroristic poison, and went on to capitalize on his general resemblance to a fleshless cadaver.

Sometimes the writers would explain his uncanny return from the presumed dead plausibly. Other times, they just hauled the Skull's narrow butt back from the brink for no other reason than they had a short deadline and it was easier than thinking up a brand new villain.

Top Notch Comics #19 (Sep 1941).

After *Top-Notch* #11, the Skull disappeared for several months. That didn't prevent Al Camerata from plastering him on the odd cover even if he wasn't blasting his way through the inside pages. But, what the heck...MLJ covers were often symbolic, usually depicting two of the featured heroes battling a menace only one of them actually fought inside.

The Skull next popped up in *Jackpot Comics* #2 (Summer 1941), slugging it out in a Black Hood story, then returned on the cover of the following issue but was not inside. Either Al Camerata really loved drawing this guy, or he kept blowing his cover deadlines.

Then came the final showdown. The cover to *Top-Notch* #18 (Aug 1941) was emblazoned "The Return of the Skull!" Never mind that new editor and writer Harry Shorten (The

THE BLACK HOOD
MAN OF MYSTERY
NO! BLAST YOU! LET ME GO!
GET OUT! GET OUT! I TELL YOU OR I'LL—
GUESS NOT!
I CAN YOU HAVE MORE USE FOR BETTER DEAD!
AT LAST THE DAY OF RETRIBUTION SEEMS TO BE AT HAND!
AT THAT MOMENT—A LASH—FLIES AWAY!
YES INDEED! SO IT WOULD SEEM!

Splash page to *Top Notch Comics* #15 (Sep 1941).

Cliff Campbell byline was dropped when Abner Sundell left the company early in 1941) had already used this title, this was a crackling new story.

The details are less important than the dénouement. By story's end, the Skull has been captured. By the bumbling

NOW, HERE'S MY PLAN!
WITH A CHANGE CLOTHING, THEN A BLOW ON THE HEAD TO KNOCK HIM OUT, THE SLIGHTEST OVER NO HEAD SO THAT I WON'T BE RECOGNIZED I'LL HAVE A SKELETON KEY THAT WILL UNLOCK YOUR SHACKLES!
NO, REALLY, I MUSTN'T ACCEPT YOUR NO, I INSIST!
BOP!

Page 3, *Top Notch Comics* #19 (Sep 1941). The Skull tricks the Hermit and injects him with the Skull Toxin, transforming him into The Skull.

HEY YOU! STOP THAT!
THIS DRUG WILL COUNTERACT THE SKULL'S POISON!
GET AWAY FROM HIM! YOU MUST BE CRAZY TO TRY TO KILL THE SKULL! THE STATES GOVERNOR DID THAT! I'M A COLONEL OF POLICE!
"YOU DOPE! THAT'S NOT THE SKULL! I TELL YOU IT'S THE HERMIT! I'M TRYING TO SAVE HIS LIFE!"

Page 6, *Top Notch Comics* #19 (Sep 1941). The Black Hood injects the Hermit with an anti-toxin.

Sergeant McGinty, no less. Convicted for murder, he's sent to Death Row. But Kip Burland is still wanted for the Skull's crimes. He knows that if the Skull is executed, all his hopes for exoneration go up in smoke with him.

The next issue opens with the soulless Skull, chained to a prison wall, refusing the Last Rites. He's still dressed in his deathly regalia. Maybe his face wasn't a mask after all.

In the Hermit's cabin, the Black Hood is facing the loss of

WELL, HE'S GOIN TO GET POLICE PROTECTION WHETHER HE WANTS TO OR NOT! C'MON, MEN!
HA, HA, HA! SO, THE SKULL IS DEAD? THIS IS GOOD NEWS! GO! HOME! YES! SKULL!
HMM, ALWAYS THEY'VE WANTED MALLOCH'S FOR ANTIQUE!
UNLESS I NEVER HEARD OF THE MALLOCH BAR. MALLOCH DEPORT? SOMETHING VERY PECULIAR ABOUT THIS, BUT IT'S WORTHWHILE LOOKING IN TO!

Page 9, *Top Notch Comics* #19 (Sep 1941). The Skull falls for the trap.

his only living link to exoneration. But there's nothing he can do. The Skull is scheduled to fry at midnight. But the Hermit has an idea. Slipping off to the Death House, he's allowed a few minutes with the Skull. The Hermit offers a bargain. In return for a signed confession exonerating Kip Burland, he will unlock the Skull's shackles and help him bust out.

Of course, the Skull agrees. Naturally, once his fetters are off, he knocks the Hermit unconscious, and—don't ask me how or why or from where—produces some of his special poison. One injection and the Hermit's face turns green, shriveling into a duplicate of the Skull's death's-head countenance. After quickly switching clothes, the Skull calls for the guard and, pulling the Hermit's hat brim low to conceal his mold-green visage, walks calmly out of prison.

In the nick of time, the Black Hood shows up. They tussle. The Skull strangles the Hood into unconsciousness. When the Black Hood regains his senses, he rushes in to warn the Warden that the Skull has escaped. The Warden shows him the false Skull out cold in his cell. Recognizing the truth, the Hood quickly administers a restorative to the Hermit, saving

Page 11, *Top Notch Comics* #19 (Sep 1941). The Black Hood defeats The Skull.

his life. Ironically, this prompts the Warden to accuse him of trying to poison the Skull! Figuring he's gone crazy, they try to clap the Black Hood in the booby hatch, but he battles free. It's now a race against time.

This is the great thing about Golden Age comics. For sheer unbridled audaciousness, they can't be equaled. No pulp house would ever publish such a yarn. Despite weak art, glaring plot holes and insane lapses of logic (where did the Hermit's beard go?) it's an exciting story. And it only gets better.

With hours to go before the Hermit is executed in the Skull's place, the Hood hatches a plan. Convincing the *Courier* to print a premature announcement of the Skull's

execution, the Hood plants a story almost certain to bait the Skull into committing an antiques robbery.

It shouldn't work, but it does. Now if you and I were in the Skull's bony place, we'd be booking passage to Tahiti and a new life. Not this bonehead. Sure as sin, he slips into the deserted mansion where the imaginary loot is under police guard.

The Black Hood pounces. A pair of fast haymakers and the Skull is knocked cold. It's that easy, because the plot demands it. Dressing him up in a dress and veiled hat, the Hood passes him off as the governor's wife to get past the police cordon.

Page 12 (left) and page 14 (above), *Top Notch Comics* #19 (Sep 1941). The defeated Skull is disguised and brought to the Governor's mansion. After being brought back to the "big house" The Skull is executed and thanks to The Black Hood the Hermit recovers completely.

While the semi-conscious Hermit is being dragged down the Last Mile, the Hood rushes the unconscious Skull to the governor's home. The governor has no problem recognizing that the unmasked Skull is not his wife. Would you? He puts in a call. With just minutes to spare, the execution is called off. The Hermit regains his true color, his freedom, and miraculously his bushy beard has grown back. And he has the Skull's signed confession!

It looks like the Skull's luck has finally run out.

The next evening he's plopped into the Hot Seat. The only concession to ceremony the prison makes is to remove his red cloak. His skullcap is replaced by a metal helmet with an electrode on top. The switch is pulled and the Skull jerks in the seat. Comic book-style lightning bolts crackle in the air.

***Shield Wizard Comics* #6 (Winter 1941).**

You can almost smell the burning…bone.

The prison doctor applies the stethoscope and says, "He's dead." Well, even back in 1941, comic book fans had heard that one a thousand times. Normally, when four-color bad guys got the chair, it was rigged to malfunction, or their loyal minions stole the electrocuted corpse and brought the culprit back to life. Was this the end of the Skull? Could it be? Over in Superman, when they gave Luthor the chair it only made him more powerful. Would MLJ actually let their most potent super-villain rest in piece?

Well, yes and no. For the Skull was back on the covers to the next two issues of *Top-Notch*. Readers must have snatched up those issues eagerly to see how the Skull returned from the dead. But they were just a tease. Inside those books, the Skull was nowhere to be found. He was also spotted dukeing it out with the Shield on the cover of *Shield-Wizard Comics* #6 around this time. But it was just another moody come-on.

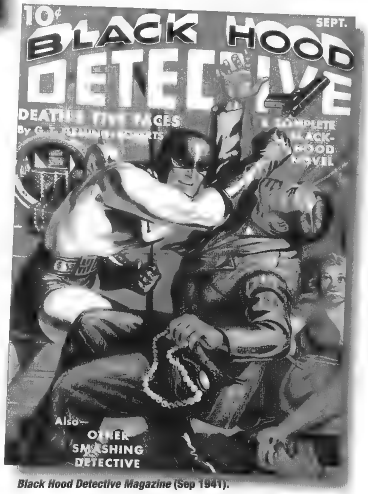
The Skull had truly expired. He never came back. At least, not during the Black Hood's long Golden Age run. I'll give MLJ credit. Frying your top hero's chief arch-villain took guts. The first time Bob Kane and Bill Finger killed off the Joker, their editor basically forced them to undo it. It was a comic book first. Never before had a super-hero's primary villain been executed by the State—and stayed dead.

The Black Hood had no sooner rejoined the force than Columbia decided that he was so popular he deserved his own pulp magazine. The announcement was made at the bottom of the very page where the Skull sizzled his last:

"IT WAS THE ONLY THING TO DO!!! The Black Hood appearing monthly in *Top-Notch Comics* met with such overwhelming acclaim that we had no choice. We are proud to announce the publication of a *Black Hood Detective Magazine* featuring the Dark Knight of Justice in a complete book length novel, along with other unique blood-chilling stories. You can't afford to miss the thrill-shot yarn that's in store for you in his initial novel...and everyone to come. LOOK FOR BLACK HOOD DETECTIVE MAGAZINE!...Only 10¢...On sale at all newsstands!!"

This was a distinction Superman, Batman and all the rest of them never earned. *Black Hood Detective* was launched exactly one year after the Black Hood debuted in *Top-Notch* #9. The date was October 1941. The author was G. T. Fleming-Roberts, a pulp writer who had previously written famous pulp heroes like Secret Agent X. At the time, he was writing the Green Ghost, a magician hero who makes his face up to look like a green skull. Maybe that's a coincidence. Maybe not.

For a guy used to writing an entire pulp novel on a monthly basis, adapting the Black Hood to print must have been an easy gig. The editor simply handed him a copy of *Top-Notch Comics* #9 and turned him loose. The origin was essentially the



***Black Hood Detective Magazine* (Sep 1941).**

DEATH'S FIVE FACES

A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

by G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

AN ORIGINAL BLACK-HOOD MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

HOUSE OF WHISPERS

6

7

Two-page spread from *Black Hood Detective Magazine* (Sep 1941).

same. The Skull remained the villain. And so, in a weird way, he did return. Fleming-Roberts made a couple of changes. Instead of starting off with patrolman Kip Burland, it was an anonymous police officer whom the Skull framed and left for dead. When he emerges as the Black Hood, he takes Kip Burland as his new identity. Under that name, he joins the force.

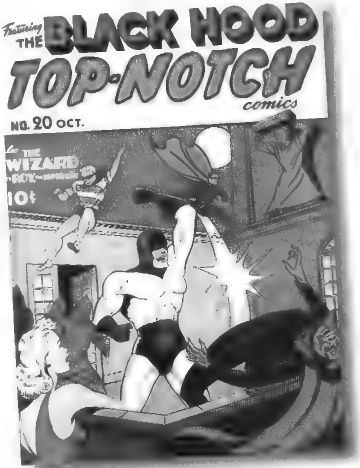
The garish costume is retained. Here it's described as a silk acrobat's costume with leather gloves and latex supporter trunks. But Roberts adds an extra touch inspired by The Shadow. If the Black Hood must operate by night looking as yellow as a bag of bananas, a long black cloak designed for blending with the shadows and concealing the unfortunate color of his shirt from view makes perfect sense. It's attached to his black silk hood.

The storyline to "Death's Five Faces" is not a straight retelling of the first Black Hood adventure. That's in there as back-story, but this is a new adventure in which the Hood once again encounters the criminal who put him on the path of clandestine crime fighting. In a more realistic tack, the Skull is almost never seen as he was in the comic. Shifting between five realistic face masks that allow him to operate openly and unsuspected, the Skull and his gang revisit the scene of the place where the Skull came to be:

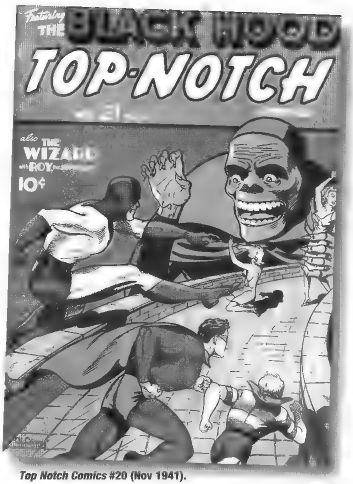
Harry Shane gasped. The Skull! He was in the hands of that monster criminal. Harry Shane better than anyone else except perhaps his partner, Hugo Barnsdal, knew the origin of that fiendish murderer who called himself the Skull. The Skull had once been a workman at the Barnsdal shops until an accident had thrown a retort of caustic chemicals into the workman's face The chemicals had eaten away flesh, destroyed all that was human of the man's face. He had become so hideous that none could look upon him without shuddering.

The man who had become the Skull had left the Barnsdal Company and for a brief time had apparently vanished from the face of the earth. Then Harry Shane and Hugo Barnsdal learned that the underworld was being dominated by a criminal genius known as the Skull. And Shane and Barnsdal had wondered then if this creature of inhuman face and inhuman deeds was not the man who had been injured in their chemical laboratory. Was this face—this face that resembled that of Napoleon—a mask covering the real face of the Skull? I suspect this origin was concocted for the occasion. In any case, Fleming-Roberts neglects to give us the Skull's true name.

Comic books loved recurring villains. In the pulps, they were the rare exception. So you could count on the criminal mastermind to die a horrible death at the end of 99% of heroic pulp novels.



Top Notch Comics #20 (Oct 1941).



***Top Notch Comics* #20 (Nov 1941).**

So at the climax of "Death's Five Faces," when the Skull meets his just deserts, seasoned pulp readers were probably surprised to read:

The man behind the desk got half out of his chair before Black Hood's right hand shot out. The gun in Black Hood's hand hammered to the killer's head, not once, but twice. The killer dropped back, his body limp....

Black Hood bent over the man who had been known as Mr. Leeds. He slipped a finger underneath the little ridge at the back of the man's head, pulled up and forward. The shaggy wig came away from a cranium that was totally bald. The mask peeled away from a face without a nose, a face of ghastly greenish flesh, pitted with scars. A face so hideous that Anna Odinstov screamed, seeing it for the first time.

For a criminal mastermind, it doesn't take much to put out the Skull's lights. The Hood simply picks up the phone and calls the Law to haul him off to jail.

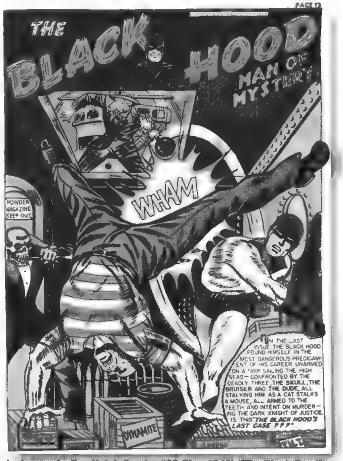
The Black Hood went on to battle other super-menaces in *Hooded Detective*, which was the new title (The rival *Red Hood Detective* had complained, forcing a title change), like The Eye and Kazzar, the Mysterious. It's almost certain there would have been a rematch with the Skull. But the Hood's pulp days were mercifully short-lived. Only three issues were published.

Silver Age readers of the revived MLJ heroes link artist Paul Reinman with the Black Hood, which he drew through the '60s. Many assumed he had been one of the original Black Hood artists. Not so. He never laid a brush on a Black Hood comic before 1964. But Reinman was the guy who illustrated some of his pulp adventures.

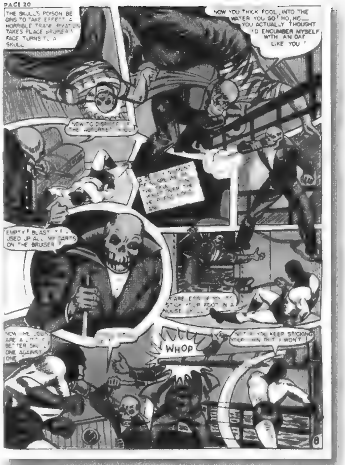
In the comics, the Skull lived on, as he rightly should, in a rather unique way. Maybe readers complained. Possibly sales sagged a little. But good villains were hard to find, never mind invent. Normally, this meant a two-panel recap—plausibility be damned—and the dead malefactor is back in monkey business.

But MLJ was playing by a different rulebook. In *Jackpot* #6 (Summer 1942) the Skull does seem to return. It's the same cadaverous green visage, a similar black outfit and red cloak, but it's not really him. Turns out—and this is pretty amazing for a guy who looks like the Grim Reaper—the Skull had a son. Yes, the Black Hood finds himself confronted by the Son of the Skull! And he's a regular bone chip off the original. The only difference is that he's toothier, wears a formal tuxedo and lacks his father's blue-black skullcap. Some of these differences may be due to new artist Sam Cooper's personal flourishes.

The career of the Son of the Skull is harder to trace than the old man's. After his *Jackpot* appearance, he resurfaces in an unusual two-parter in the renamed *Top-Notch Laugh*, where he's teamed up with an odd pair resembling cruder versions of



Splash page to *Top Notch Comics* #30 (Nov 1942) "The Black Hood's Last Case???."


PAGE 20
THE SKULL'S POISON BE GOOD TO TAKE EFFECT
MAKES FLUKE SMUGGLER FALL TUMBLES TO SKULL
NOW YOU THICK FOOL INTO THE WATER YOU GO! NO, NO! YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT I'D ENCUMBER MYSELF WITH AN OAF LIKE YOU!
NOW TO DISPOSE OF THE WORTHLESS CARGO!
EARTH'S BLAST USED UP ALL MY SHOTS ON THE BRUISER!
NOW, WE USE A SMALL BIT TEN SHOT SLOW BURN FUSE!
WHOP

Top Notch Comics #30 (Nov 1942) page 20. The Skull kills one of his henchmen and battles The Black Hood.

the Ox and Dapper Dan of later Spider-Man fame. The Skull's henchmen are known as the Bruiser and the Dude.

In *Top-Notch Laugh* #30 (Nov 1942) the Black Hood catches up with what the anonymous scripter calls the Deadly Three. But he finds himself trapped on board a ship by the Son of the Skull and his henchmen. That's how "Quest for Revenge" ends.

The ominous title to the next story is "The Black Hood's Last Case?" It sure looks that way. Yet henchman by henchman, the Hood turns the tables, until the Dude is dead by his own weapon, and the Bruiser has turned green and desiccated, a final victim of the Skull family poison.

Finally, the Hood is face to face with the Son of the Skull in the ship's magazine storage hold. "All right, Hood!" cries Skull Junior. "I vowed vengeance for my father! And now I'm going to have it, even if we BOTH die!" Tossing a lit hurricane lamp into the stacked cases of dynamite, the Skull blows up the ship. When the debris finishes settling on the ocean, the Black Hood is the only survivor. Clinging to a stick of flotsam, he's in big trouble. A passing ship doesn't see him. Then, like a miracle, something red floats within reach. It's the Skull's crimson cape. Waving it, the Black Hood is rescued. Later, on dry land, he tells Barbara Sutton, "And there's your story, Babs...The end of my three worst enemies!...And the unbelievable part is that the Skull himself saved my life indirectly, when his cape floated up to me! Fate has played some crazy trick, but that one takes the cake!"

That's one way of looking at it. Maybe that was the last of the Skull's son. Maybe not. All I know for sure is that the father stayed dead.

Comics scholars have pointed to MLJ's star-spangled Shield as the first patriotic super-hero, and the obvious forerunner of Captain America. Back in the early 1930s, future Timely publisher Martin Goodman and future MLJ owner L. Horace Silberkleit (he went by Louis only later) partnered up to start a pulp magazine chain. Within a year, Silberkliet was out and Goodman had full control of Red Circle as it was called. Silberkleit quickly organized his own company, which he called Blue Ribbon. I imagine bad blood lay behind that split, because ever after Goodman and Silberkleit battled for domination among the bottom-feeders of the pulp jungle.

When Goodman started Marvel Comics in 1939, Sliberkleit jumped right in with Blue Ribbon Comics and then *Pep*, starring the first patriotic super-hero, Shield. Both houses exploited the horror-terror end of the super-hero food chain. This meant sterling super-heroes against depraved torture-mad super-foes.

And they are always at each other's legal throats. When Captain America debuted, Silberkleit accused Timely of

continued on page 75

PAGE 21
"OUR END OF THE HUNT" IS OVER AND MINE BEGINS
WHAT'S HE DOING INTO THE MAGAZINE ROOM FOR? HE'S GOT SOMETHING UP HIS SLEEVE!
ALL RIGHT, HOOD! I VOWED VENGEANCE FOR MY FATHER!
CRASH!
BUT NOW I'LL HAVE TO BLOW UP THE SHIP AND WE BOTH!
DANGER
BOOM
BOY! I DIVED OFF THAT BOAT NOT A SECOND TOO SOON!

Top Notch Comics #30 (Nov 1942) page 21. The Skull and The Black Hood continue their battle, ending in a fiery explosion.

Adams
continued from page 39

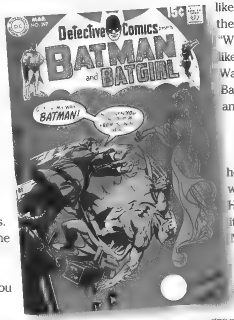
did "Kryptonite Nevermore"—I knocked that cover out in a couple of hours and it's a piece of crap. Everybody remembers it. They're making posters of it. It's beyond me. Now, I recognize, yes, it's a cool cover in an iconic way, but when I did it, nothing. I just did my job. You just never know. I don't think you can predict and I don't think that, no matter how skilled you are, you can't…. Steven Spielberg did *1941*. I think it was a great film. Personally, I think it was great.

YOU THINK ME INSANE? THEN I SHALL REJOICE IN MY INSANITY--
-- AND IN YOUR DEATH!
THE SPANISH DUKE WHO ORIGINALLY BUILT THIS FORTRESS HAD AN INSIDIOUS MIND...

***Detective Comics* #397 "Paint a Picture of Peril," was inspired by a storyline in *Citizen Kane*. So it was only fitting that Adams made the main antagonist of the story resemble Orson Welles.**

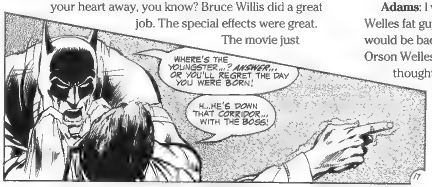
CBM: You're the only other person that I know beside myself who thinks that. It's one of my favorite Spielberg films. Most people argue with me about that.

Adams: I love that movie. The one with Bruce Willis, the science fiction film, he's a cab driver (*The Fifth Element*). One of greatest films I've ever seen in my life.



CBM: That movie has a great look to it.

Adams: But the guy's a cab driver and he's going to save the universe without ever wanting to, with concepts that are just so hard to accept, a universe sucking creature out there. And this stuff is drawn directly from comic books. I recognized those characters. I drew them in *Ms. Mystic*. The bad guys in *Ms. Mystic*, I'm convinced those are my characters. The bad guys, you know, they were all kind of globby. I think that's a great movie, and people piss on it. The actress they used, to take your heart away, you know? Bruce Willis did a great job. The special effects were great. The movie just chugged along, all kinds of good action and stuff. Nobody liked it. So, I'm certainly not the decider, and I don't know. I'm the guy who cuts a slab of meat and puts it out and says, "What do you think?" And everybody goes, "I like it, or I don't like it." But, honestly, I can't tell you why "The Secret of the Waiting Graves," in some weird way, stands out. It's the first Batman story that I officially did. I didn't think it was much of anything.



Adams' Batman was not only realistic, but also threatening and frightening, as shown here from *Brave and The Bold* #93.

CBM: So you guys didn't sit and talk about this.

Adams: Even when I read the thing, I thought "What the hell, Denny's going to totally screw this thing up." I mean, I wanted to do Batman, I'd done these great stories with Bob Haney, and now I get this ghost story that Denny writes and it's nothing. I did it and everybody's like "Wow, cool!" Okay. Nobody's as smart as you'd like to be.

CBM: The next story, "Paint a Picture of Peril," is loosely based on Citizen Kane. I think O'Neil based it on Kane's relationship with the amateur singer who he was grooming to be an opera star. Did you base the look of that character on Welles? He looks almost like Orson Welles?

Adams: I was told by Denny that he just wanted an Orson Welles fat guy. And I thought, if I drew Orson Welles, that would be bad. I know Denny told me that it was based on Orson Welles, it was Orson Welles related to that movie. And I thought, "Okay, it's a fat guy. I don't want to do Orson Welles. That's not right." It doesn't seem right to me. But people equate fat guy to Orson Welles, so there you go. That was a story that I believe Dick inked. It was after that story that I got together with Dick, and I said, "Dick, we're going to have to talk. If you're going to ink my stuff any more, we're going to have to do a better job than this." I wasn't really happy with that story. And I

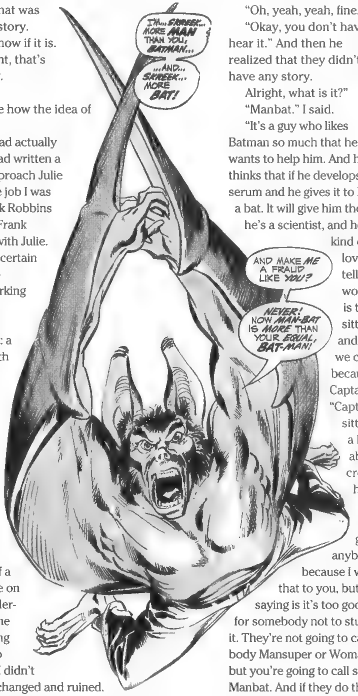
thought, shoot, I'm doing *Deadman*, you know. Let's get a relationship going, because I had a feeling that I was going to be written by Denny and inked by Dick, and let's sit and talk. Let's get serious about this stuff. If we're going to work together, let's do some nice stuff. And I think that was the time where Dick and I seriously started to work together.

CBM: I didn't know that was the significance of that story.

Adams: No, I don't know if it is. It's just that, at that point, that's when we started talking.

CBM: Can you tell me how the idea of Manbat came about?

Adams: Yes, I can. I had actually thought about it, and I had written a synopsis. I wanted to approach Julie with after I'd finished the job I was working on. He and Frank Robbins were sitting at his desk, Frank Robbins was fairly new with Julie. Julie attaches himself to certain writers. He's very writer-oriented, and he was working well with Frank Robbins. Generally, the way it happened with Julie was: a writer would come in with a story and then Julie would tell him he didn't like it. And then it would evolve into another story. So you get used to Julie that way. The first idea that you're going to present him with, he's not going to like, then you're going to work together and change it and make a story out of it. It's kind of a game. I worked with Julie on Spectre scripts and I understand Julie and the way he works. I had been thinking about how I was going to approach Julie because I didn't want this Manbat story changed and ruined. I was trying to think of any way I could to present it right. Anyway, I was at Dick's desk, for some reason, probably handling work in, and I had noticed that they were in there for quite a while talking back and forth. It was a hot day and the sun was coming in Julie's window, and they basically had come to a dead end. So Julie turned to me and said, "So, smiley. So, Adams. You got a Batman story?" And I said, "Yes, as a matter of fact I do."


I'M... STRONGER... MORE MAN THAN YOU, BATMAN...
...AND... SAVAGER... MORE BAT!
AND MAKE ME A FRAUD LIKE YOU?
NEVER! NON MAN-BAT IS MORE THAN YOUR EQUAL, BAT-MAN!

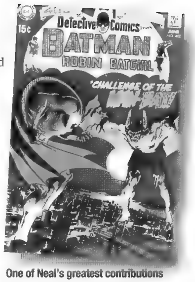
"Oh, yeah, yeah, fine."

"Okay, you don't have to hear it." And then he realized that they didn't have any story.

Alright, what is it?"

"Manbat." I said.

"It's a guy who likes Batman so much that he wants to help him. And he thinks that if he develops a serum and he gives it to Batman it will make Batman more like a bat. It will give him the powers and abilities of a bat. And he's a scientist, and he wants to do this." So, Julie was still kind of poo-pooing the idea though Frank loved it. So, I said, "You know, Julie, I'll tell you what. What's going to happen…I won't do this, but what's going to happen is that somebody at Marvel is going to be sitting back in their chair sometime soon, and they're going to be going, 'You know, we could create a Manbat character, because they had screwed DC Comics with Captain Marvel by stealing the name "Captain Marvel." Somebody's going to be sitting there saying, you know we can do a Manbat. DC Comics can't do anything about it. They have Batman. We can create Manbat. We don't have to make him a real bat, but we'll own it.' "I don't think you want to do that. If I can think of it, they can think of it. I'm not going to tell anybody, because I wouldn't do that to you, but what I'm saying is it's too good of an idea for somebody not to stumble across it. They're not going to call somebody Mansuper or Woman Wonder, but you're going to call somebody Manbat. And if they do that, they've got it. Now, this is a good idea. If you



One of Neal's greatest contributions to the Batman mythos was his creation of Manbat. Who made his debut in *Detective Comics* #400.

RIGHT: Dracula's transformation in Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) bears a striking resemblance to Adam's Manbat.

want to talk seriously about it. I'll give you the story."

"Well, this story is for Frank."

I said, "Fine, I'll just give him my outline, and he can do it."

He said, "Will you draw it?" I said, "Yeah, I'll draw it and I'll do it right."

CBM: So, once again, you used this psychology of working on the paranoia of DC with Marvel?

Adams: Well, I don't think the paranoia of DC was all that was needed. I think a little bit of paranoia on the part of Julie and the fact that Frank had no story that day, and he didn't want Frank to walk out without a story. And Manbat is not a good story, it's a great story. And so we did it. Good story, good character. I walked in to my friends at DC Comics and planted my seeds. Manbat, good character. Maybe he'll be in one of the movies.

During Adams' tenure on Batman, the editors at DC decided to move Batman out of Wayne Manor and the Batcave. He was relocated to a penthouse atop the Wayne Foundation. In the above scene, Batman makes a rare return to his subterranean home only to battle Manbat.

CBM: They could do it now.

Adams: Yeah. In fact, I think they did, didn't they? I think it was called *Dracula*.

CBM: Oh, you're talking about Coppola's *Dracula*. Yeah, he did remind me quite a bit of Manbat. Didn't a couple of comic book artists, Mike Mignola and Jim Steranko, work on the concepts for that?

Adams: Why don't they call me?

CBM: They should have.

Adams: Funny about that.

CBM: Do you remember the Batmobile that appeared in that issue?

Adams: Kind of a sports car.

CBM: Yeah. is that your design?

Adams: It's cool. But it looked like a sports car. It looked like a car. You could actually drive around the city in that and be cool.

CBM: It was much more inconspicuous.

Adams: It was a Corvette, remodeled.

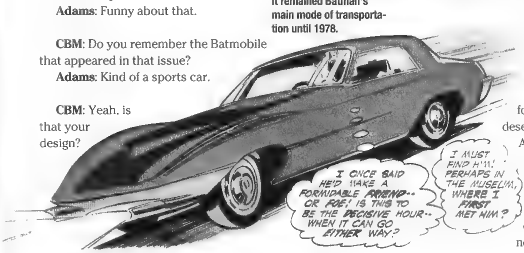
CBM: "Ghost of the Killer Skies"—that was kind of an odd teaming between Batman and Enemy Ace. Was that something that you came up with? You were close with Joe Kubert.

Adams: Joe is my friend. We're not close with each other, but he's my friend.

CBM: So the idea of teaming them....

Adams: It comes from my being a fan of Joe. My being a fan of Joe goes much deeper than just saying that. I did an Enemy Ace book that Joe Kubert inked. It looks like Joe Kubert drew it. It has the feel, not quite as much as the one that I did with Joe. To me, the density of respect for Joe Kubert can never be as great he deserves to be. Joe is a primitive. He's an American classic. It's like he created himself out of parts that are very hard to recognize. I know some of the influences but I don't know how it became Joe Kubert. The things he offers as an artist to other artists are not his style, they're his brevity, the

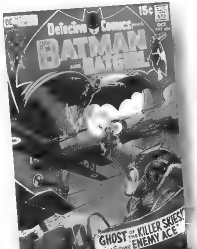
Neal's remodeled, Corvette Batmobile made its debut in *Detective Comics* #400 (June 1970). It remained Batman's main mode of transportation until 1978.


I ONCE SAID HE'D MAKE A FORMIDABLE ARCHENEMY--OR FOE! IS THIS TO BE THE DECISIVE HOUR--WHEN IT CAN GO EITHER WAY?
I MUST FIND HIM! PERHAPS IN THE MUSEUM, WHERE I FIRST MET HIM?

IT'S STRING YOU WE WITH THE LOSER... MAYBE HE'S FORGOTTEN I'M NOT ARMED--?
KA-POW
VON HAMER IS A NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN A FAIR FIGHT!

In the tradition of William Wellman's *Wings*, Batman and Franz duel to the death in the skies over Spain. "Ghost of the Killer Skies" *Detective Comics* #404.

composition of a page, the intensity of the artwork. People are yelling, people are intensely yelling, like this—shit's blowing up in your face. There's a visceral quality to Joe Kubert's stuff. And I find myself to be slightly conservative compared to him. I like to jump into that Joe Kubert work and grit my teeth and feel little chips breaking off. To me, that's really great. Personally, I see Joe Kubert's influence in my work. He's a master. I try to not modernize it, to make it more real. Some of the things that people like a lot in my stuff, in my opinion, are



I AM SORRY FOR TROUBLES, MEIN HERR! PERHAPS WE ARE NOT FATED TO COMPLETE ZIS FILM, EH?
VON HAMMER WAS A GREAT BELIEVER IN FATE... THE DESTINY OF THE KILLER SKIES, HE CALLED IT!
PERHAPS... VON HAMMER'S GHOST IS OUR ENEMY, EH?

Heinrich Franz, was he Baron Hans Von Hammer (Enemy Ace) reincarnated? As Batman says, "I guess I'll never know..."

my making aspects of Joe Kubert more real. So they go, "How does he get all that grit and emotion in it?" Well, underneath it is things I learned from Joe Kubert, and other people, of course. You don't usually see guys that draw realistically get grit. You don't see the muscles bunched and the tendons stand out in the middle.

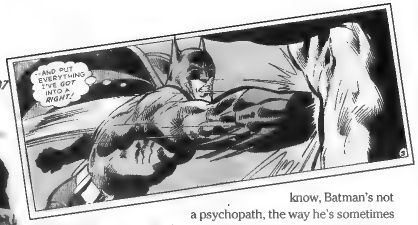
This panel from *Detective Comics* #404 embodies all the things that made Adams' Batman legendary. A starry night with a glowing, full moon; a life threatening situation; and the dark, shadowy figure of The Batman making a desperate lunge with his scalloped cape enveloping the night.

CBM: That's what I was talking about in that first question about *Brave and the Bold*—that you presented a gritty image of Batman. That is the way I look at your Batman, besides being realistic—that he could walk into this studio, but the fact that he was gritty, that's part of the realism, that's part of life.

Adams: Right. It's true with people. For example, Sean Connery. When Sean Connery walks into a space, the space changes. He may be an actor but he just makes a space change. I just saw a preview of the new movie that he's in...

CBM: *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Adams: ...and his presence on the screen is just like... everybody in the audience is like "Oh!... Oh!... Sean Connery's in this...Oh! What's



Sean Connery's Bond and Neal Adams' Batman: Gritty, dangerous, resourceful and intelligent.

he playing?" Shit, Sean Connery. He was in a movie about knights of the round table (*First Knight*) that was on last night. He's in it with Richard Gere. I don't even know what the movie is. The shot last night that got me was, you see Sean Connery and Richard Gere, from the back and they walk into this room and there's the round table. Sean Connery kind of goes in and then he turns slightly to the right and there's Richard Gere. Now, Richard Gere is a reasonably sizable man, not gigantic, but he's certainly not small. And he's next to Sean Connery, but Sean Connery looms toward Gere mildly arching his neck, but like an animal, yet he's a civilized man. And Richard Gere is like this; you know (showing the difference in their sizes). It's a presence. Some people have that. Sergio Aragones, have you met Sergio Aragones?

CBM: I've never met him.

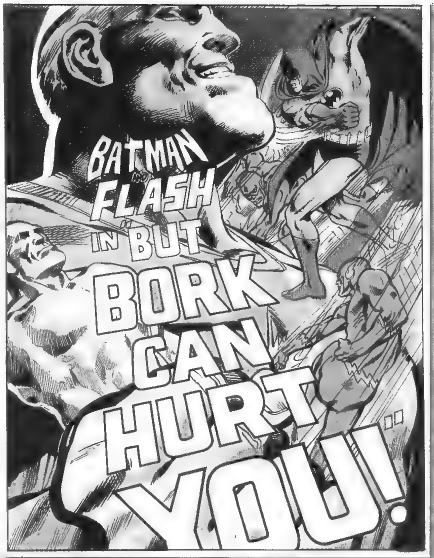
Adams: Really nice guy. He's actually 6'2". He stoops down a little bit because people are shorter than him. 6'2" is not that big, I've said, "Sergio, stand up. You don't have to be so nice to people, to be kind, just stand up." So for a moment he straightens up and lets his chest fill. He goes like that (puffs out his chest). He used to be on a rowing team and his neck goes up like that, and "Whoa," suddenly, he's in the room. But he doesn't like to impose on people that way.

CBM: It's funny that you bring up Connery, because his Bond is the one that everyone else is measured by. I see a similarity between your Batman and Connery's Bond—gritty, dangerous, intelligent. All of those things. You know, Batman's not a psychopath, the way he's sometimes portrayed. That's why I've always felt that if the Batman films had modeled themselves after the Bond films they would have been much better, because your Batman has that feel. He has that presence. He's dangerous, but intelligent.

Adams: I did this scene, Denny wrote it, where this guy's bitching on Commissioner Gordon and Batman is in the corner and steps out and goes "Boo!" And, I thought, I can do this. If you put yourself in the position of that guy and had this guy who takes up a sufficient volume of space and just leans forward and goes "Boo!" Cause it's funny. But you know it's funny.

CBM: Actually, it was one of the things I was going to bring up in the interview. It's an amazing moment. That's one of the things that would be the epitome of your Batman, right there.

From *Batman* #234 Aug 1971, unlike some of the more recent portrayals of Batman. O'Neil and Adams' Batman was very human and quite capable of being humorous.



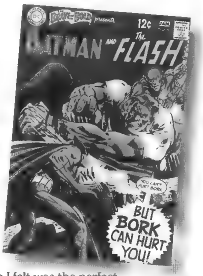
Neal followed his "gut" and changed Bob Haney's original title for *Brave and The Bold* #81 to "But Bork Can Hurt You!" Twenty-five years later, people still compliment him on that story and its title.

Adams: Yeah, well. Isn't it funny how people remember things? The weird thing is the impact, the sense of what it should be fits you and you do it. That's one of the things that I find myself doing without really knowing it. Then, later on, when somebody asks me why I did it, I can't tell them. But it comes back to the need to make decisions as you go along. Sometimes part of you can make enough decisions that you've made five decisions, and now you're doing something else. You didn't rationalize that decision, it just seemed like the right thing to do at the time, so you do it. Intelligent people often second-guess themselves over and over. Sometimes, you're better off not second guessing. Like first hitters, they hit you and they don't think, when usually they win the fight. It's good when you're fighting somebody, but I remember one of the things that Bob Haney did was he did this Bork character in The Flash/Batman story. He had some title, and it was one of these standard titles. Then the dialogue that he wrote was, "you can't hurt Bork, but Bork can hurt you." And I thought, "I've got to use that as a title. That's a great title." Why did I think that was a great title? I don't know. Viscerally it felt like a good title. So I said to myself, "They're going to argue for the other title and have a letterer do the other title. So why don't I do this? Why don't I just take the title I like and spread it across the illustration in such a way that you can't get rid of it?" So this illustration of Flash running up this big shot of Bork and the lettering mostly covered it like a pyramid of lettering. You can't separate the lettering from the art. When I handed it in, they said.

"It's not the title."

"I know, but it just seemed like a great title, so I made it part of the illustration. I can do it over if you want."

"No, no, it's fine." I have people walking up to me 25 years later at conventions and saying "But Bork can hurt you... Bork can hurt you?" They repeat it to me. Why do they remember that? That's not even a title, but people remember it. It's one of those gut things you do. "But Bork can hurt you." Do you remember that title?



CBM: Of course.

Adams: There's lots of other titles, but you don't remember them. I did another title that my writer refused to use. Roy Thomas at Marvel. The title that he used was, I believe, "The Andromeda Spawn" or something like that. But the title that I indicated for him to use, which I felt was the perfect title was "Three Cows Shot Me Down." In my mind, the story was diminished by the title not being there. There's this underground thing, because when I did that I wrote "Three Cows Shot Me Down" at the bottom of the page. Since certain people saw it on the penciled page, and even on the inked page, because it remained there on the bottom of the page, and on xeroxes that exist. People would come up to me and they'll say that "Three Cows Shot Me Down," that would have been a great title. So on the new cover as an homage to that thing, when they reprinted *The Avengers*, I

On this page, some examples of Neal's realistic fight sequences. *Detective Comics* #408 (above), *Batman* #232 (right), and *Batman* #245 (bottom).

have The Vision coming in about to die saying "Three Cows Shot Me Down." Because it's a great title, maybe not for a movie, but definitely for a comic book.

CBM: *Detective Comics* #408: "The House That Haunted Batman" contains one of your great choreographed fight scenes. Most comic book readers were used to those over-the-top fights. No one had seen realistic fights like yours. What was your influence in depicting violence?

Adams: There's a back and forth that you can do with comic books. I think it's a valid back and forth. I don't think there are any winners in the back and forth. That is, you know, superheroes are constantly going into deserted warehouses and smashing them down, there's just so many deserted warehouses in the world. They all must be gone now. So there's a level of battle that takes place in comic books that is so far out of the ordinary that its contemplation isn't realistic. Like in the recent X-Men movie, Wolverine has these blades on his hands. The logic is that the only way that he could fight would be to kill people. So, in this movie, he kills a bunch of people at the mansion who are military personnel, supposedly mercenaries, who may be working for a bad guy, but they all probably have families and lives. So there's a part of you, where you're watching the action, where you go "Oh, shit. He's killing these guys. You know, can't you just knock them out?" There's that discomfort level where it's starting be to explored a little bit in comics where real action leads to real results. If you punch somebody in the side of the head, they go down, and if you punch them hard enough, they won't come back up. There are places you can hit people that are much more vulnerable than other places. If you hit somebody on the jaw and their jaw is not tightened, they'll

YEAH...THAT'S DUMB! TO THIS KIND OF SLIME, MERCY DOESN'T EXIST...TO HIM, YOU'RE NO MORE THAN A USEFUL WORM!
YOU, ME... GOTHAM CITY! TO THE BIKERS OF THE WORLD, WE'RE TOOLS...THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS GREED!

go out. It shakes their brain. So, to me, the boat that was missed, and has always been missed in comic books, is to make it real. It's much more effective. You start to feel it, then you get it. It's not that big Gil Kane punch, a body flips over and then immediately gets up and can fight back, or like watching kung fu movies. Nobody gets hurt. So, it seemed to me that the boat had been missed in comic books. It's perhaps not a contribution, but something I preferred to do. And that was, let's really make these things count. It can be a small thing. Make it count. Punch a guy in the side of the head. Show a picture of a guy getting punched in the stomach but show his back so you see the folds of his clothing, and you feel the impact. Then when he goes down he doesn't get up. To me, that's impressive. It would be impressive if I saw somebody else do it. Same standards do that same thing. I did a thing, I realize this is an interview about Batman, but I did a thing in *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* where I had this kid with a crossbow, aiming a crossbow at Green

Oliver Queen (Green Arrow) is shocked when he is struck by a quariel (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85).

Arrow. He shoots him with an arrow which is called a quariel and he just hits him in the shoulder. So, you go "it's in the shoulder, happens all the time in comic books." Well, no. If you get hit in the shoulder with a quariel or even an arrow or even a bullet, you ain't gonna get up real easy. This is a hard thing. So I made the experience personal. He actually aimed the thing, he actually shot it, it actually seemed to go into Green Arrow's body who seemed to be shocked, then he went down. So we went

JOHN - PERHAPS WE SHOULD HELP HIM - CALL AN AMBULANCE, OR SOMETHING
IT'S NOT SMART TO GET INVOLVED, KARA!
OUT OF ORDER
GO HOME, KILLER 'N' OPEN YELLA.
HELP ME

In a brilliant sequence O'Neil and Adams show Oliver Queen desperately searching for help after being wounded (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85).

through this sequence of events where he's trying to get help from people who think he's either drunk or whatever the hell's wrong with him, then he enters a hospital and they're looking for his insurance, and he collapses across the nurse's desk. All of these are results of what, in a regular comic, would seem to be an innocuous piece of action, but if you break it down into its parts, suddenly it becomes very real. Well, people aren't used to seeing that.

CBM: And there's no dialog in that scene either.

Adams: Right. The same thing is true of Batman. This idea of punishing somebody with a bald fist and hitting them just right, going through actions that people think are maybe not that impressive. Also, in those days a lot of those older generation guys, they never took any kung fu classes or any judo classes. I've taken them. I'm not a fanatic about it. I just took them to find out what they are about. There's a lot of power going on. And to express that power is more significant than the big action. You can have all the fights in the warehouse you want, but one down and dirty fight in an alley is more impressive, in my opinion.

DAUGHTER OF THE DEMON
Dear Batman. We have Robin! Save him if you can!
STORY BY: DENNY O'NEIL
ART BY: NEAL ADAMS & RICK BURCHETT
LETTER BY: JULIUS SCHWARTZ

The beautifully composed splash page to *Batman* #232. Here would begin the epic battle between The Batman and his new foe Ra's Al Ghul.

CBM: In my opinion, your run on the *Batman* title was the best I've ever seen on the character.

Adams: Some fools seem to like it.

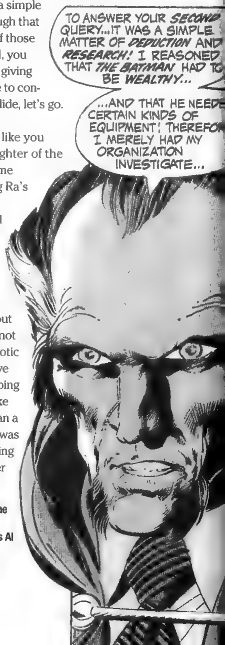
CBM: Do you see any difference in your work on that title as opposed to *Detective* or *Brave and the Bold*?

Adams: No, not at all. The truth is, when I got the script, I didn't know where they were going, I just knew that I was going to be doing *Brave and the Bold*. I saw the difference between Bob Haney and Denny O'Neil.... When you work with a different writer you structure yourself, you decide ahead of time how you're going to structure it. You can't take the same attitude toward, say, *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, as you take toward Batman. Denny wrote fairly simple stories. He kept them clean. So, when I was doing those stories, I did the same thing only more so. I really slicked them up so that you could read a 24-page story and think you'd read a 16-page story. You slide right through the story. That's a storytelling skill. There are ways to lead the eye and cause the eye to read it a certain way. I've always felt that it was the responsibility of the artist to grab the viewer's eye and make them read it the way you want them to read it. If you do that, it's like a pact. You know you make a deal. If you want to read one of my things, go with me. You're going to read it this way. Let's do it this way. I won't let you down. The second time you read it may be slightly different, but work with me and I think you'll have a good time at the end. Just go with me.

If you design the story in such a way that you cause readers to read it that way, you go past things, slow down, speed up, stop, go, jump. You can do those things quickly. But a lot of it has to do with design, sometimes it's the content, style, there are lots of things, but you can do that. What I did with the stories that I did with Denny as opposed to Bob Haney is I found that he liked to stick to a simple idea. So I could slide you through that story. Anytime you read any of those Batman stories that Denny did, you never had the sense you were giving yourself a job. You didn't have to contribute. This is the top of the slide, let's go.

CBM: Absolutely. You felt like you were in that world. The "Daughter of the Demon" story—can you tell me about the process of creating Ra's Al Ghul's look?

Adams: Yes. Well, my initial response to that story was that Denny had given me too little to work with. He didn't give me a character. This Ra's Al Ghul was simply a bad guy. And the guy would not stand out in a crowd. You know, he was not big, not small, just a slightly exotic businessman. You know, you've got to find an actor. Who's it going to be? So I clearly couldn't make Ra's Al Ghul anything more than a guy, a strong guy. The muscle was Ubu his bodyguard. It's one thing to do Orson Welles, it's another thing just to do a guy who is


TO ANSWER YOUR SECOND QUERY...IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER OF DEDUCTION AND RESEARCH! I REASONED THAT THE BATMAN HAD TO BE WEALTHY...
...AND THAT HE NEEDS CERTAIN KINDS OF EQUIPMENT; THEREFORE I MERELY HAD MY ORGANIZATION INVESTIGATE...

Our first glimpse of Ra's Al Ghul. In the interview Neal gives a detailed description of how he developed Ra's Al Ghul's features and characteristics.

AND INSIDE THE LUXURIOUS JET...
YOUR WARD AND MY DAUGHTER WERE IN MORTAL DANGER TONIGHT, BRUCE! I HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO ACT! YOU SPOKE OF GOING OUTSIDE THE LAW!
NOT SO YOU EXHIST! ANY CRIMINALS WHO HARM MY WARD SHOULD EQUIP HAVE TO DO WITH ME!
IN FACT, OF THOSE WHO HAVE, NONE HAVE SURVIVED!
"OF COURSE, BUT I DO ASK GOOD FOR YOU TO CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS TO GAIN CONTROL...
"OF COURSE—THERE IS A RISK AHEAD! I'LL HANDLE IT—I'LL BE RISKIER TO DO THE THING BY HAND!
THE EVENING WITH THAT CLOWN! DRINKS SO LOVES AND MY PARENTS AND THE CHILD THAT WAS INSIDE HIMSELF STROLLING HOME FROM A MOVIE, HAPPY CONVERSATION SUDDENLY...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
OOH, I DON'T LIKE THIS!
AAGH!
HELP! POLICE... HELP!
SHUT UP! I MEAN... SHUT UP!
PLEASE, DON'T...
CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

On this page, O'Neil and Adams' powerful, faithful and incomparable interperatation of Batman and Robin's origins.

seemingly very strong. What to do? What makes a guy, a regular guy, look distinct? In other words, how many elements can you put together that a person could have and still look like a regular guy and still have him stand out. Well, you can make him bald. You can trim his hair a certain way, not like a clown, or what do you do? Okay, so let's say he has no eyebrows. People actually draw Ra's Al Ghul with eyebrows. Ra's Al Ghul has no eyebrows. I like that because that meant that something happened in his life that removed his eyebrows. It doesn't bother him at all. It's part of him. If that were the case, wouldn't it be interesting for him to have kind of a thick brow, almost primitive. But if he had a thick brow he might look primitive, so now I have to focus on him not being primitive. So give him a thick brow but make the rest of the features of his face not primitive. Have his hair recede, because he's been around and experienced life. I don't want him to look like all those other guys with Green Lantern hair. So give it a design, because he's got it, he's fine with it. It's his style. He's got a style. His name is Ra's Al Ghul. He should be sort of mideastern, not oriental, because oriental means no facial hair. Mideastern, but not a beard. Everybody's got a beard, so give him something interesting as facial hair. And see what happens when all those pieces are put together. Does it become somebody original? Wow, it did. That was my surprise. I was like, "Whoa, it kind of looks cool." Very interesting. And nothing from anything else. In other words, nothing borrowed. He was just a guy who obtained a style in his life valid for him, maybe and for only him. Cool. Not a superhero. He doesn't wear a costume. He wears a suit and maybe has a cape on, but, you know, just for the hell of it. Because he's cool. Sometimes you start down a path and you don't know if the end will be successful. One thing that I like to do is to go, do it without saying ahead of time, "Will this work?"

CBM: He's a great character. He's an icon now because he's used at DC constantly.

Adams: And I don't know why. You can't put your finger on it. But there it is. It works.

CBM: That issue also contains your very powerful Batman and Robin origin segment. How did you come to the decision to put that in? Did you have any influence over that?

Adams: In that case, I did ask for it. Only because I wanted to do it, I'd seen it done and I didn't necessarily *not* like it. I convinced Denny O'Neil and Julie, I guess I convinced Julie, you know [whispering]): "I've never done the origin of Batman. I'd like to do it. We've all seen that first one, and we've seen other people screw with it and it's never very good. I just want to do the first one. Not change it, just do it. Just me do it." So, he said, "Okay, have Denny throw it in."

IN A SINGLE, SEARING MOMENT, MY CHILD-HOOD WAS GONE, BLASTED BY A CHEAP SLUG'S BULLETS, AND I WAS LEFT ALONE IN A WORLD GROWN COLD...
I'D KNOWN I WOULD NEVER AGAIN KNOW PEACE! STANDING OVER THE BODIES OF MY MOTHER AND FATHER, I MADE A SILENT VOW...
I WOULD AVENGE THEIR MURDERS—I WOULD DEVOTE MY LIFE TO A RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME...
AND SO I DID. HAD I REALIZED THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK I'D SET MYSELF, I MIGHT HAVE BEEN DAUNTED. FOR MANY LONG HOURS IN THE LABORATORY...
AND EQUALLY LONG, EQUALLY BRUTAL HOURS IN THE GYM, TRAINING, DEVELOPING EVERY CONCEIVABLE SORT OF SKILL...
I WAS NOT YET OLD ENOUGH TO VOTE. A TOTALLY INEXPERIENCED, FANATICAL YOUNG MAN...
CONFLICT WITH A FOE BUT UNABLE TO HOLD IT. THEN, ONE NIGHT A WAY CHANCED! A NEW IDENTITY! A NEW FUTURE AND CAUSE!
I FELT OBLIGED TO BE A COMPLETE SUPERSTITIOUS JOT...
AND I KNOW ONE OF THE REASONS I'VE STAYED AT IT FOR SO LONG IS BECAUSE I'VE NEVER LOST SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT I OWE MY LIFE TO BRUCE WAYNE AND THE MAN HE CALLS FATHER. WE FORGED A LIFETIME BOND BETWEEN US—AND A COMMON PURPOSE!

THE COIN HAS ACCIDENTALLY THE JUNK PART OF HIS FACE... AND SO TWO-FACE MUST REMAIN!
AS THE BELLS OF ARKHAM CITY TOLL ANYBODY NEARBY SOON IS GRIMLY GRAND JURY ON THE BUILDING OF HIS PARTICULAR CONFERENCE WITH HIS ATTORNEY, DARNELL...
A KNOTTY PROBLEM, MASTER DARNELL?
HMMM? ALFRED? I SUSPECTED THAT OUR OLD FRIEND TWO-FACE MIGHT BE BEHIND THIS BALLOON THING!
...HE COULDN'T RESIST THE SLUGGIN ON THE FLOOR--DOUBLE-HEADED COIN AND ALL! PRESIDENT... THE TWO-FACED WOMAN GOD
ARE YOU SURE, SIR? ISN'T TWO-FACE DEAD?
HE ESCAPED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO! NOW COULD ANY ONE HERE TO CLOSER WITH DEVIOUS AS HARVEY?
KSSSS
BLAM!
REMEMBER, ALFRED, HOW TWO-FACE CAME TO BE? HOW ANY YEARS AGO WAS IT WHEN THAT TREACHERY GANGSTER HURLED A VIAL OF ACID INTO THE FACE OF BATMAN'S MOST BRILLIANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY HARVEY DENT...!

WHAT A MAD AND DIABOLICAL CHASE HE LED BATMAN AND ME WHEN HIS HALF-RUINED FACE TWISTED HIS MIND TOWARD CRIME...
I...
IT WAS ONLY THANKS TO COSTLY SURGERY THAT THE PERSONALITY OF HARVEY DENT WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE LOST OF MADNESS...
ONCE AGAIN HE RECOVERED... AND, SOON AFTER, WAS SEEN ON THE STREETS OF GOTHAM CITY, ONE LONELY CRY WARNED IT'S EXPECTED TO STOP A ROBBERY...
A-- RIGHT OF THIS, TRACY? WHERE YOU ARE!
NO INTENT WAS HE ON CAPTURING THE TWISTED, MAD MAN WHO ONCE WAS DENT. HE WANTED ONLY THE SATISFYING RUSH THEY HAD BEEN...!
IT WASN'T UNTIL HE STAGGERED HOME AND LOOKED IN THE MIRROR THAT HE SAW THE TWISTED, TRAGEDY TOOK HOLD OF HIS MIND ONCE AGAIN...
THE PLASTIC SURGERY? IT'S ALL BEEN UNDONE! I CAN NEVER BE REPAIRED AGAIN! I'M TWO-FACE AGAIN! TWO-FACE... FOREVER!
BLAM

O'Neil and Adams' two-page origin of Two Face in *Batman* #234, is one of the best and most memorable of the character, displaying both Harvey Dent's sorrow and horror.

CBM: Great. The Two-Face story, "Half an Evil"—whose decision was it to bring him back? He had been out of commission since the '50s.

Adams: Denny and Julie. Every once and a while they ask me, "What do you think?" Denny and I agreed we liked the old character and wanted to bring it back. So Julie, with stories that we did, brought the Joker back, brought Two-Face back. We didn't bring the Penguin back. But other people were there to bring that back. You can't not like the double-sided aspect of Two-Face. You can pretend, and you can say you don't get it. He's too insane to live, but, at the same time, you like to watch it. And the flipping of the coin…?

CBM: It's great. It has the origin sequence with Two-Face.
Adams: That one is remembered.

CBM: I love that one. It's the best version of Two-Face's origin. That splash page has your pencils as the background.
Adams: What is that? Is that with the ship?

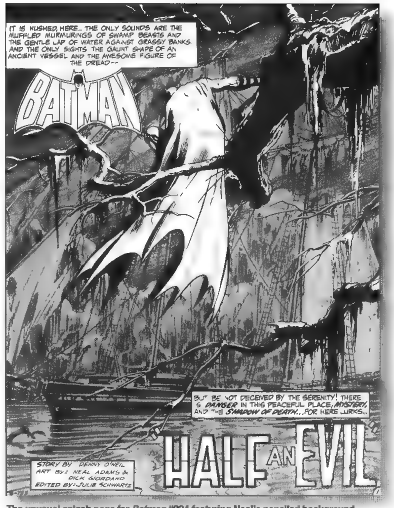
RIGHT: A fine example of Neal's uncanny ability to draw his characters realistically, endowing them with realistic expressions. His Batman was unlike any we had ever seen before. *Batman* #234 (Aug. 1971).

CBM: Yeah.

Adams: Oh, yes. "You can't do that, you know." [quoting, shaking his finger]

CBM: That was my question for you. Here you are, you're bringing in these commercial art techniques that are used in the commercial art world, and you're bringing them into comics.

Adams: Like prying open the jaws of death. New drawings here. "What are we going to do with them, Neal?" "Well, I'm going to turn one into a half tone." "We don't do halftones in comics." "Okay. This is what we're going to do. We're going to use a stat machine. Those plastic sheets on top of the Photostat machine that nobody uses, those are halftone separations. Take a pencil drawing and make it into a halftone, then we're going to shoot the other drawing on to acetate. We're going to paint out the back of it and put one on top of the halftone." "That won't work. It's just too confusing. It'll be a mess." "I don't think so." "Well, alright. It's just Neal being crazy again." "We'll do a drop out." "A drop out? What's a drop out?" It's something that everybody uses now, I think there must be a drop out button on your computer."


IT IS HUSHED HERE... THE ONLY SOUNDS ARE THE RUFFLED MURMURINGS OF SWAMP BEASTS AND THE GENTLE LAP OF WATER AGAINST DRAGGY BANKS AND THE ONLY SIGHTS THE GAUNT SHAPE OF AN ANCIENT WEEGEE AND THE AWESOME FIGURE OF THE DREAD--
BATMAN
BUT BE NOT DECEIVED BY THE SERENITY! THERE IS DANGER IN THIS PEACEFUL PLACE, MYSTERY, AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH... FOR HERE LURKS...
STORY BY DENNY O'NEIL
ART BY NEAL ADAMS & DICK GIORDANO
EDITED BY JULIE SCHWARTZ
HALF AN EVIL

The unusual splash page for *Batman* #234 featuring Neal's pencilled background.

CBM: So you're the first person to actually do that at DC.

Adams: No, you've got to understand that everybody did that stuff before when there was the real world and then before they fell into this hole. There was a character called "Fate" who was printed in dropout, in purple. He was the narrator of the book that was done by Bob Powell and he'd be in the top of every panel having conversations with you and he'd be a drop out. Every page all the way through the book. Joe Kubert did 3-D. I mean everybody did this stuff. It's just when everything closed down, the top went on the bottle. And everybody thought it was new. Neal invented new colors! [laughs] Imagine... He invented new colors! They have a thing that some of the guys referred to at DC Comics as Neal Adams blue? Neal Adams blue is B Y2 R2. That is, you take blue and you add 25% yellow and 25% red and it makes a night sky, but it's a really nice night sky. It's not blue, or blue with red in it so it's magenta. Blue with yellow and red, which makes it dense. It's Neal Adams blue. [Whispering] "Nobody does that." They told me you couldn't have more than 250% of a color on a panel, on a page, or in an area. I'd say, "Why?" "Well, because the ink would get too thick and slide around." [Whispering] I said "But we print on toilet paper. Nothing is going to slide, believe me. Maybe on a *New Yorker* magazine. We print on toilet paper, don't you get it? You can put a thousand percent of color on it. Add color. It won't slide."

"Well, during the war, World War II." yeah.

At one time maybe that was the quality of paper but not now. So then the next job I did I did 100% yellow, 100% red and 100% blue. [laughs] To piss them off.

"You can't do that."

"Yes, I can."

"It'll slide all over the place."

"I don't think so." Of course, it didn't. It's embarrassing. Is it revolutionary saying something like one plus one is two? Golly, I hope it works. Guys, please. What would be funny, of course, is if the paper slid.

CBM: The "Night of the Reaper" story involved a Jewish Holocaust victim who seeks revenge on his captors. You portrayed Dr. Schloss, the villain, with an incredible amount of pathos and the story was very powerful. What were your feelings about that story?

Adams: Tell the story, that part was all I cared about. The rest of the story was a crock. It was a story that sort of started out with stories of Rutland, Vermont.

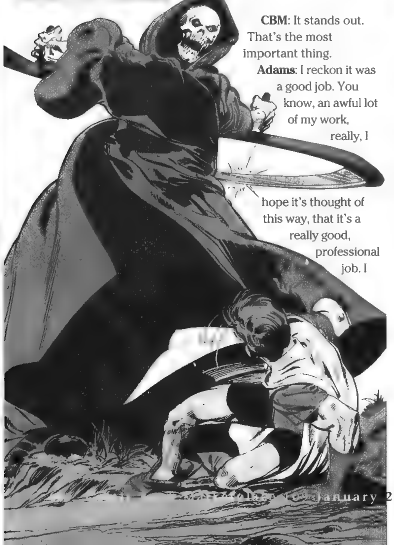
CBM: Right, the costume party.

Adams: Everyone came back from Rutland. I didn't go, but they kept on telling stories about it. You know, we ought to do a story about this one. I'm told Harlan said we ought to do a story on that. Good idea, why don't we do it. It would be a great story. And then all this stuff was essentially given to Denny and Denny wrote this really great story. So I thought, "Well, shit, everybody's gonna look at this story. I better do a good job." So I tried to....

In *Batman* #237, the benevolent and sympathetic Dr. Schloss is also the deadly Reaper.

CBM: It was great.

Adams: I wish I could tell you there was more to it than that, but that's it.

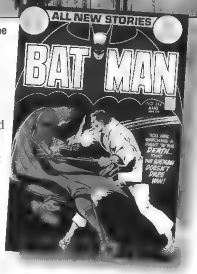


CBM: It stands out. That's the most important thing.

Adams: I reckon it was a good job. You know, an awful lot of my work, really, I hope it's thought of this way, that it's a really good, professional job. I want people to know the extent that I try. I always try to do a good job. If I do a storyboard for an advertising agency or whatever it is that I do, I always think, "I want this to be worthwhile. I want to learn something during the process of doing this." And if I do, then the people who look at it will feel that.

THE LAZARUS PIT!
TWO MEN--EACH RAISED--TRAINED IN THE FIGHTING ARTS. EACH SUPERBLY CONDITIONED--FACE EACH OTHER IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE A DUEL TO THE DEATH!
AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF AN ADVENTURE TO SHOCK--TO STUN--TO PRESENT INSURMOUNTABLE CHALLENGES TO THE DREAD...
BATMAN
STORY: DENNY O'NEIL
PENCILS: NEAL ADAMS
INKS: DICK GIORDANO
EDITOR: JULIUS SCHWARTZ
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES, FRIEND BATMAN--
--TO SETTLE THEM WITH HONOR--MORTAL COMBAT!
IF YOU INSIST, LING--

The splash page to *Batman* #243, "The Lazarus Pit." The beginning of Batman's two issue global vaunt battling Ra's Al Ghul.



CBM: Well, Neal, I don't think there is anyone out there who is going to consider you someone who is unprofessional or somebody who didn't put everything they had into it. I don't think that's the perception anyone has of you.

Adams: Good. There you go. I didn't even have to say that.

CBM: The Ra's Al Ghul saga that runs for approximately three issues—that resembles a sweeping, worldwide James Bond epic with Ra's Al Ghul as the meglomaniacal Bond villain.

Adams: Sort of in the animated series too.

SHE'S A GOOD WOMAN... AS BLAINE IS A GOOD MAN! EVEN KING HAS A KIND OF RAW NOBILITY...
...I HATE RISKING THEIR LIVES! FOR ANY LESSER CAUSE, I WOULDN'T!
BUT RA'S AL GHUL IS LIKE THE MOUNTAINS AND DESERTS HE FAVORS... SAVAGE-- MERCILESS!
HE MUST BE STOPPED!

Similar to Bond pursuing Blofeld in distant locations, Batman rushes to infiltrate Ra's Al Ghul's secret fortress (*Batman* #243, Aug 1972).

CBM: Right. Did you like that portrayal of Batman, kind of out of his element from Gotham City?

Adams: I didn't think of it that way. I felt a little uncomfortable when he was on the snowy mountain and when he confronted those guys in the caves. Because I think that I probably should have made it darker. When I was doing it, I was thinking, you know, Batman can do this shit anywhere. He can hide himself in the snow, you know. Wherever he is, he uses whatever the elements are. It sort of worked like this with me. If you interviewed Denny, you would hear the same thing. The relationship that Denny and I had at that time was, he would not have to take the extra effort to describe what he was driving at. And he could take that time and put it into the story and into the dialog. Because he pretty much trusted me that I would give him what was in his mind, or close to it, so that he didn't have to think about it. That's the part of the relationship that I think is most important. In effect, I became a director. When I do this stuff, I think of myself as a director. I'm making that script into something real, and I hope that the writer likes what I do. If he doesn't, of course it would bother me. Sometimes, people get very emotional about it. My writers generally have been pretty happy.

Ra's Al Ghul rises from the Lazurus Pit at the conclusion of *Batman* #243.

CBM: When I was nine, I picked up this cover (*Batman* #244). It was very jarring.

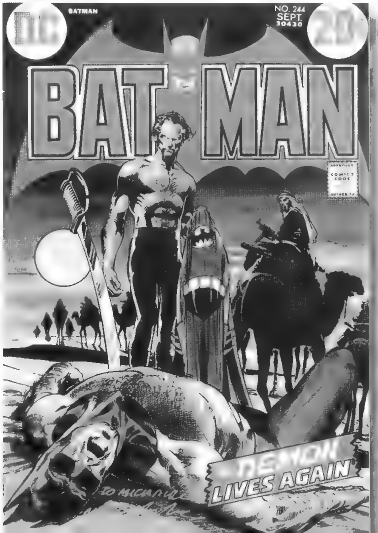
Adams: Batman has hair on his chest!

CBM: Because it's Ra's Al Ghul and Batman in this stark desert.

Adams: It's like some photographer went there.

CBM: Right. Batman's out of costume, he looks dead. Is this the effect that you wanted? It was startling to see this cover. I had never seen anything like it before.

Adams: Julie actually said, "Do you really think you ought to put nipples on him? They



really don't put nipples on people in comic books." And I thought, "What a weird question." "Yes, Julie, I think he should have nipples and hair on his chest." So when I did it, it was passed around the hall. Think about this. It never occurred to people that Batman had hair on his chest and had nipples.

Similar to Errol Flynn's duel with Basil Rathbone in *Adventures of Robin Hood*, Batman and Ra's Al Ghul battle face-to-face in *Batman* #244.

CBM: Because Batman wasn't thought of as a real person. You were the first person to make him real.

Adams: But, if you think about it, that's kind of nuts.

CBM: It's a jarring cover. Not only that aspect…

Adams: "Hey, guys, did anybody notice that he must have two pair of pants?" See? He's got two pair of pants. "I was going to make him naked, Julie, but I thought that wasn't a good idea." What about when he kisses a girl? Has hair on his chest and kissing a girl, that's like…

CBM: Yes, because the conclusion of that story reads like a classic Errol Flynn adventure. The two combatants duel with swords, the hero overcomes the clutches of death, he decisively defeats the villain and embraces and kisses the villain's daughter. Your Batman was very passionate. What was the reaction at the DC office to seeing those final few pages?

Adams: They loved them. They certainly didn't bother anyone. I didn't quite like the ending, because the girl had to save him.

CBM: You made that kind of obtuse. You had to really, really look at that panel to realize what had happened.

Adams: Yeah, that's something you don't usually see in comics either. But, you see, I come from the real world. There are things that you almost are shocked that haven't been done. You see them and you go, "I saw that in a movie so, what's the problem?" Hello, am I in a room all by myself? It's in a movie. Let's do it. Remember, I had done a syndicated strip before this, very limiting. All this space, pages, and covers, and I could just do anything I want. They didn't know what the hell I was doing. I'd go away and I would come back with a cover, and they'd say, "Good," or they'd be shocked or whatever it would be. And they'd know that they'd get good sales. So they really almost didn't question me. [Whispering] "Did you see the cover? Batman hasn't got a shirt on." "Really?" "Don't let the girls see it." It's one of those like, how do you say it? When you walk into a place where all these restrictions have happened, and, out of either respect or enlightened self-interest, or whatever the hell it was, they left you alone just to do what you might do. And you weren't afraid. Some of the things that you do you think are nothing. While other things that you think are shocking are not shocking at all. But you get to do it, you get to play. I was the wild man from Borneo they called Smiley. What happened was, there were all these people out there, and I began to feel it after a while. People in college, people in school… comic books. I never thought… they're comic books, but I never thought of them as art. I never thought of them as a pursuit. I never thought of them as more than, you know, you open the bubble gum and you get a little comic strip. Is it worthwhile? I mean, you know, you

Ra's Al Ghul's daughter Talia administers an antidote to Batman and saves him after he's been struck down by a scorpion during his duel with her father. A scene Neal disliked. BELOW LEFT: Harkening back to the days of Flynn and de Haviland, Batman passionately kisses Talia after defeating Ra's Al Ghul. This was a far cry from the Batman of the fifties and early sixties.

start to go, "Wait a second." If you go by the standards of history, then comic books are a pure form. Judged by way of history, they're not. They're not drawn for the Pope or for a client who wants a portrait. They're drawn to tell a story. They're written to tell a story, that's all, and they're not written for children.

CBM: Like Egyptian hieroglyphics. The fact that the pictures tell a story. It goes that far back that we want to see a story.

Adams: More important than that. Look at caves. It's a form of entertainment. You draw pictures on the cave, and then you stand in front of the pictures and you tell the story of what happened that created these pictures—who was killed, how it happened, why that man is dead over there. So you're combining words and pictures to tell a story. At a certain point, those elements have been separated and then you have painters and you have writers. Then you have plays that you need many people for—radio plays, movies, television—but you need many people. Suddenly, a form comes along where one or two people can tell the whole story, and it doesn't have to be for the king, or for the church, or for the French dilettantes, it can be for kids, semi-adults. Freedom, caves, comic books. What form is purer? I'm not saying it's art, I'm simply saying what form is purer, whether it's art or not. If you take the best artist and the best writer in the world, won't they produce the best comic book? Won't that be the greatest piece of art? I don't know. What I'm saying is, there's something about the form. And I know that in my head I can mess you up. I can take Batman's shirt off and show his nipples [laughs]. People, smart people, noticed, had to notice.

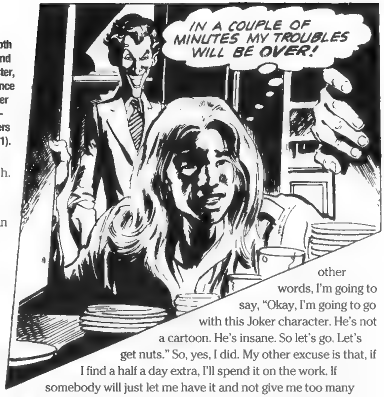
CBM: "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge"—that might well be my favorite Batman comic. Can you tell me how the decision to return the Joker to his homicidal roots came about?

Adams: I found myself being very uncomfortable with that story, because he was homicidal. I didn't think of the Joker as being homicidal, but Denny did. And I thought, "I'm a professional, and if that's where he's going with this, by golly, I'll go with it, just to be able to do the Joker." I, in fact, talked to Denny, "You've got him blowing up a guy, he's dead." And Denny was like, "Well, Joker's insane. He's a murderer." "Okay, I'm with you. Whatever you like." So, I thought, "Well, what I'm going to do is I'm going to ink this one myself." I want it to be real. I want to add that reality to the Joker. Periodically, I was inking one or the other book myself. I think I started with this boxer. You can see it very, very clear, but it's very clear in the sense that

HA-HA HA HA

Published here for the first time, Neal's recent recreation of his amazing cover for *Batman* #251.

you see all the elements and change the camera angle so you get something very real. Suddenly, I'm introducing you to a story. So, I set it up to be very real. So, now Packy White's very real, and we're going to do a Joker story. Now, people were pulled into the story.



The Joker, both frightening and horribly sinister, about to pounce on and murder one of his ex-gang members (*Batman* #251).

CBM: It seems to me that you took this story up a notch. The storytelling and the art are breathtaking. Did you really put an extra effort into this one?

Adams: You'll find that I'm a very shallow person. You can pretty much see when I put extra effort into it. I felt that it was very important at the beginning of the story, because we're dealing with the Joker. Remember, Batman is a real character, and he's a real thing. So, now, we're doing the Joker on the edge of reality. It's got to be more real. So, by inking it myself, I could add things. The fact that I inked it myself really made it turn the edge, because, no matter how good an inker is, and Dick is a terrific inker, they're not going to get all the nuances. If I'm going to communicate, in other words, I'm going to say, "Okay, I'm going to go with this Joker character. He's not a cartoon. He's insane. So let's go. Let's get nuts." So, yes, I did. My other excuse is that, if I find a half a day extra, I'll spend it on the work. If somebody will just let me have it and not give me too many covers or just give me some way to stay up a few hours longer, I will put it in. Because I really like this shit.

WHEN WE FINALLY ANGLED HIM, WE SWORE WE'D KILL YOU ALL. -- REMEMBER?
CHECK! -- W-WHAT'S THE CAVE AFTER OL' PACKY?
CORRECT! I'M GUESS'N'S HELL BY CHARITABLY MODERN BUBBY ONE OF YOU SHOULD'VE TAKEN OUR OFFER. YOU'RE SHOT. UNDER POLICE PROTECTION!
I CAN'T FORCE YOU TO COOPERATE, PACKY--
--HOWEVER, YOU JUST MIGHT HAVE A SLIGHT ACCIDENT. A FATAL-TYPE ACCIDENT--
SO, TO GET IN WITH THE DRAGGER, YOU TWIST YOUR PAL!
--AND IT JUST MIGHT PUT YOU IN THE HOSPITAL.
YOU CAN SURRENDER OUR-SELF, OR WE CAN CONTINUE PLAYING!
YOUR CHOICE, PACKY. MAKE IT!
--WHERE OFFICERS GUARD YOU, SCUM'S CAUGHT!

Packy White calls first Neal starts "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge" with a dose of reality by constantly moving the camera during this scene (*Batman* #251).

CBM: I remember seeing the announcement for that story. I was waiting with bated breath for that thing. I distinctly remember seeing, in the letters column, a small sample of it. The anticipation for that issue was amazing. People were going crazy for that book. I wanted to show you three examples in the story that I thought were astounding. I thought that was the Joker at his most frightening. He's about to pounce on Bigger Melvin and kill this guy (page 10).

Adams: But he shows up, this guy's been running for like—I don't know—five panels. He gets there, and the Joker is waiting for him.

CBM: Sinister.

Adams: The other thing too is that a lot of people haven't done it, even since then. You'll notice, in every frame where the Joker appears, he's always smiling. Because the smile is frozen on his face. People forget that. They change his expression. He can't change his expression. There's a movie that the Joker is sort of based on…

CBM: *The Man Who Laughs*. Yeah, it's a Victor Hugo book. They carve the smile into his face.

Adams: Yeah, he can't not do that. That's cool. Horrible, but cool.

CBM: That brings up the second sample that I wanted to show you. In this one he's comparing himself to the shark (page 16).

Adams: [Whisper] But that was done in all innocence. There's another panel like that. Wait a second [laughs].

The Harlequin of Hate: Conrad Veidt as Gwynplaine in *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), the inspiration for The Joker (left). The Joker insanely compares himself to a shark (above). Neal frames The Joker intentionally within a shark's jaw (right).

CBM: The shark's jaw (page 14). I love it.

Adams: I tell you a thing that's cool. If you do it, anybody else that does it is copying. If you get there first, and you do it, everybody says, "That's cool." Nobody can be the first but you.

CBM: Then, this one, which has become a Batman icon (page 21). Was that your decision to put that image on the cover (*Batman: Illustrated by Neal Adams*)?

Adams: I told them, look, if they're old stories we ought to do a sort of old icons redone, made new. "Oh, really? You're just going to use old drawings?" "No. I'm going to respect the iconography of the old poses that everybody remembers, and I'm going to do them new again. I'm not going to change them, I'm going to re-render them and add something to them." "Oh."

CBM: The "Moon of the Wolf"—did you know ahead of time that that was going to be your last story for DC Comics?

Adams: No. It wasn't, was it? I did *Superman and Muhammad Ali*.

CBM: I guess I'm thinking more along the standard comic titles. Did you know that you were going to move on to Continuity?

Adams: There was no moving on. I'm not one of those people who say, "This is the very last time." I never do that. That just takes so much self-importance.

CBM: Before we get back to this last story, all your fans would love to see you do Batman again. Has DC ever offered you anything or talked to you about it?

Adams: Yes, they did. *Batman/Poison Ivy*, a graphic novel, was presented to me by Archie Goodwin and written by Denny O'Neil. I had agreed that I did want to do it, and they sent me the script. For whatever reason, there was a lot of talking. I asked if there could be more action, and I was perceived as being difficult. I tried to explain that, if people are waiting for me to do a Batman story, and there's not a lot of action, they're going to feel let down. So, I would be taking the job under false pretenses for them because they're going to want to see this stuff, and it's not

THE KNIGHT ARE TAKING OUT THE BATMAN! I'M FLYING TO THE HEAD! THE BATCLAWS IN THE SQUALP! HAHAHA!
I CAN'T BAT UP TO FULL SPEED!
—AND WE HAVE A BIG START!

This image of Batman chasing The Joker on the beach (*Batman* #251) has become iconic. Neal redrew it for the first volume of his collected edition of Batman stories.

there. So, if you guys wouldn't mind, you know, punching and pushing a little action into it. Then Denny got his back up, for whatever reason, because, apparently, I would later learn, that he had rewritten it a couple of times for Archie and now he didn't want to do it again. So, Archie withdrew the story. Gave it to someone else. I didn't feel I'd lost anything.

CBM: If I could just interject my opinion of that. I thought that story stunk. That's my opinion. I'm glad that you did not do that story.

Adams: Actually, I don't know that the story was that bad. I think, probably, I could have pulled something out of it, you know… Why don't we just let off at that point. This is important: I didn't actually give it a pass. I simply asked for more action. It was withdrawn from me. For whatever reasons, I'm sure there'll be an opportunity for me to do Batman again. Do I think I will do a Batman story again? Yes, probably.

CBM: Is there a writer you'd like to work with or would you prefer to write the story?

Adams: Sure. I truly feel that I understand the character. I wrote Deadman, for the most part.

CBM: You wrote *The Spectre* too.

Adams: I wrote *The Spectre* too. And, nobody's come up to me and said, "I don't like it." They're pretty happy with it. In fact I've seen the theme from "Stop That Kid Before He Wrecks the World" used many times over by others since I wrote that Spectre story. I've done some short stories. I've done some stuff in comics, I do stuff outside of comics. There's a tendency not to want to find out that Neal will write *and* draw a great Batman story. Too much shock "God, no." It's good. Question is: could I afford the financial loss Continuity would incur if I did such a story?

CBM: That battle on the top of the skyscraper between the

The werewolf in "Moon of The Wolf" is actually olympic decathlete Anthony Lupus who is under the nefarious control of Batman villain Professor Milo.

THE DARKSIDE IS DEFINITELY NOT WANTING A WAR!
AND I SAY THE BATMANT REALLY LOOK OUT HE JET TO BE PUNIED!
WELL, HE'S TO SHARP POINT HIM…
BUT I DON'T PLAN ON RING THE MAIN COURSE ON ANYBODY'S JUMPSUITS
AND AS MOSES VERY FAST INDEED - FOR THE CAPED CRUSADER HAS SPENT MANY HOURS FOR MANY YEARS LEARNING HOW TO USE HIS CAPE AS A WEAPON OF CHOICE WITH THE MOST OUTLANDISH TOOLS…
A WEREWOLF? — IT SHOULDN'T BE EASY FOR THE BATMAN TO TURN SHOT!… BUT STRANGE! FURRY WEAPON!
HE SHOULD STAY UNDER THIS ENOUGH FOR ME TO GET GOOD SHOT. WORK FAST
HE'S UP TO HIS FLUFFY TRICKS AGAIN, I'LL HAVE TO TAKE HIM OUT (THERE I FIGURED!)

In *Batman* #255 "Moon of The Wolf," The Caped Crusader battles a rampaging werewolf. This would prove to be Neal's last Batman story for DC.

werewolf and Batman. The story's climax reminded me of a Universal horror film. I remember reading somewhere that you were captivated by the way Christopher Lee looked and his cape moved in a Hammer *Dracula* film. How much of an influence have horror films been on your work?

Adams: I don't think you can put your finger on it. Yeah, I like the old good stuff. I like all the new good stuff. There are a lot of images lifted. It's hard to find really good stuff, and I've got an eagle eye out for it, because I always do research. So, anytime I see anything that's good, I lock it into my head to pull out later for whatever reason I need it. Because you don't get to take photographs for a lot of this superhero stuff. You kind of have to draw it. Normally, I would rather use photographs, but with superheroes you have to get that stuff. You can add photographic reference to it, but you've got to keep a log of stuff in your head. I would say there's an inspiration from the Christopher Lee movies because of the way he moved and the way he made his cape work. But, you could put that together with Errol Flynn who did a lot of that stuff and Basil Rathbone. Here's Basil Rathbone fighting Errol Flynn on a beach, whipping his cape around and throwing it off and then continuing battle with the flowery shirts and shit. It's great.

CBM: Looking back, what is your favorite Batman story that you did?

GRRR
GRRR
HE'S SMARTER THAN I GAVE HIM CREDIT FOR! CLIMBING UP THE SCAFFOLDING TO SURPRISE ME BY SURPRISE!
—AND HE MIGHT HAVE SUCCEEDED IF HE'D KEPT HIS STUPID MOUTH SHUT!
OH—OH— I'M SORRY, I ASKED!
BUT EVEN AS HE HURLED TO MEET HIS FOE, THE BEAST-THING'S FULL RANGE OF FURY BOOM FROM THE BRAWNY BEHEMOTH—AND THE MOST POWERFUL SUPERHERO ON EARTH IS SUDDENLY, UTTERLY OVERWHELMED!
—IRRESISTIBLE FOR THE STRONGEST, MOST FEARSOME CREATURE ALIVE!
—THE ANGUISH OF THE PAIN!
JUST ABOUT HAD BRUCE'S COMING. NOW, I WON'T GO TO THE STREETS TO STOP HIM—UNLESS—
—NAH. I'M BRUTAL, BUT I'M NOT LIKE THAT!
AARGHH!
ONCE MORE, THE BEAST THAT IS ANTHONY LUPUS HURLS HIMSELF FORWARD!—ONLY TO BE STOPPED AGAIN!—SHOCKINGLY SHORT BY ANOTHER CRUEL INJURY!
BLASTED FOOL! I ONLY MEANT TO WING HIM WHEN HE STOOD! BUT HE WALKED RIGHT INTO IT!
FOR A MOMENT, THE BEAST-THING STANDS TREMBLING, FOR DEATH HAS COME TO HIM!
THEN, SLOWLY, HE BEGINS TO REALIZE THAT HE FEELS NO WEAKNESS, NO PAIN!—THAT THE SHOT OF STEEL ROD WHICH FOR SO LONG HAS BEEN AFFECTED HAS HIT BY ALL!

The final battle between Batman and the werewolf atop a still-under-construction skyscraper plays out like a classic Universal horror film, complete with spooky thunder and lightning. Note: Poster for Universal's *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man* (1943).

Adams: I don't think I have one. I hate to be anticlimactic. I find something good in everything that I do or else I probably wouldn't have done it. I always find something interesting in what I work on. Always. If it's not there, I put it in. So there's nothing that stands out as a favorite. The favorite stories are stories that take the longest to do, and then I get to enjoy them that much longer. "Batman House of Mystery"—nice long story. We got to do a lot of stuff in there. But then, somebody would immediately say, "Well, what about Batman/Joker?" "Well, what about the werewolf story?" So, I'm sort of like everybody else. If I come upon Neal Adams stuff by surprise, I look at it and I like it. I don't think of it as being mine. I think of it as being a comic book. I would hope the same thing would happen with most people who do comic books. I look at my stuff like I didn't do it.

CBM: Then you can enjoy it. That's great that you can actually sit back and enjoy what you've done.

Adams: Exactly. I do. I just… I'll read my comic books [laughs]. I like them!

CBM: I have one last thing that I wrote down here that I wanted to tell you. What separated your Batman from all the others was that you breathed life into him. No one had seen the character that way before. You made the readers believe that he could exist, that he could walk the earth. So I truly believe that you saved the character and that you helped elevate him to the icon that he is today.

Adams: Well, I don't know that I saved him. I certainly agree that I probably helped to elevate him to where he is today. You know, when you do artwork, if you just do artwork, and you don't think of it as people and directing and all those things that are associated with the storytelling, then if you do artwork as storytelling and you can add art to it, the artist can get a great deal of joy as a storyteller. I don't know how to draw as an artist. I think that probably I draw pretty good, but I draw as a storyteller. If you asked me to do a sketch of Batman or some character, I have to have a drop of blood coming down his face, so something has to be happening in the drawing that commits to a story. I have to have a story. I know, when I'm drawing this guy for some commercial thing, I have to know the guy to understand what he's doing and why he's there.

CBM: It's very much what you were talking about before—director, or even an actor—you have to have a point of reference. You have to have an understanding of who and what you're doing.

Adams: I have always felt that people were drawing Batman the comic book character and they were doing comic book figures. When I started to do Batman and anybody else that I do, I don't think that way. I think I'm telling a Batman story about a real character. I'm telling that story. Not that I'm drawing it, I'm telling it. I think that's why I enjoy the work. One of the reasons I have so much fun with what I do is that I'm telling stories. You can tell from the beginning conversation about my new project how much I enjoy… not just the science and all the other… I enjoy telling the story.

CBM: It's passion.

Adams: Oh, well, maybe passionate… I just like it. You know? There must be something to it. I don't get it, but I understand it's happening. And I understand it happens, but I don't understand what the difference is. And I don't understand it isn't the same for other people. But apparently, it's not. I don't know why? I wish on everybody that draws that they could enjoy art as much as I do. Well, drawing comics. I think Joe Kubert does.

CBM: Thank you, Neal.

Adams: It's a pleasure.

PAGE 22
BUT I CAN'T KEEP FLOATING THIS WAY FOREVER, IF I DON'T GET PICKED UP SOON, THE SKULL... ...SUE HAVE HIS REVENGE AFTER ALL!
A SHIP! THEY'LL NEVER SPOT ME UNLESS I SIGNAL. THEN, BUT HOW?
WHAT'S THAT FLOATING OUT THERE? I'LL BE I LOOKS LIKE...
IT IS! THE SKULL'S GONE AND WHAT'S THE DOCTOR DROWNED!
SOMETHING WRONG OUT THERE, CAPTAIN?
YES! I SEE IT TOO! I'M TRYING TO MAKE OUT WHAT IT IS. GOOD LORD!!! IT'S
WHEW! IT'S A GREAT YARN ALL RIGHT, BUT I COULD NEVER PRINT IT IN MY PAPER. NO ONE WOULD EVER BELIEVE
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT AND THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE PART IS THAT THE SKULL HIMSELF, HAVING MY STORY PUBLISHED WHEN I HAVE GONE FLOATED UP TO ME AND PERHAPS PLAYED SOME SELLY TRICKS, BUT THAT ONE TAKES THE CAKE.
DAYS LATER, IN SHERIDAN SUTTON'S APARTMENT
AND THERE'S YOUR STORY, SUE! GIVE ME THREE MORE CHAPTERS AND I'LL HAVE A SERIES
The End

***Top Notch Comics* #30 (Nov 1942) page 22. The Skull's cape helps to rescue The Black Hood.**

Skull

continued from page 53

copying The Shield's bullet-deflecting body shield in the design of Captain America's original triangular shield. To placate MLJ, Cap's shield was redesigned as a disk. Subsequently, a new villain was introduced into Shield-Wizard Comics. Dubbed the Hun, he wore a chain mail shirt like Captain America, and threw around a similar round shield, except that his sported a Nazi swastika. Smacks of non-actionable retaliation to me. MLJ also took to calling the Shield the "Original Shield," as if resentful of Captain America's superior sales, and having their artists nakedly swipe Jack Kirby's panels and page layouts.

It wouldn't surprise me to learn that in launching Captain America, Timely plucked the Skull from *Top-Notch* and just changed the color of his mask and his political affiliation. Goodman was like that. He'd lift anything not nailed to the wall. That same month, a hero called the Blazing Skull first appeared in Goodman's *Mystic Comics*.

Not that Joe Simon or Jack Kirby necessarily copied the Skull directly. All Goodman had to say was "Give me a villain (or a hero) with a skull for a head" and the rest would naturally fall into place. Otherwise, the rival Skulls might have hatched from the same gruesome egg.

For the record, Kirby said that scriptwriter Ed Herron created the Red Skull. If he did, Herron didn't think him out very well. It's pretty obvious that the Red Skull is wearing an outfit modeled after the Nazi flag. Unfortunately, if it were colored the appropriate red, coloring his skull mask an identical bloody hue would never have worked. Something had to give.

I've never understood the popularity of the Black Hood. From his beginnings in *Top-Notch*, he soon found a spot in *Jackpot Comics*, took over the Hangman's own title, then replaced him in the back of *Pep*. Only heavy hitters like Superman and Captain Marvel enjoyed that kind of exposure.

What was his secret? Did all the other super-heroes get it wrong? While they were favoring blue and red and green costumes, was second-banana yellow the secret ingredient?

Surely, the short-lived Black Hood radio show that debuted in 1943 gave the character a happy boost. But that didn't explain his 1940-42 success. Nor does it explain why as early as 1942, after all other MLJ super-heroes were pushed out of *Top-Notch Laugh* in favor of the humorous hillbilly Pokey Oakey, the Black Hood alone remained—although he was soon eased off the covers. Was he on the decline? Did he get his own title in '43 simply due to the radio program, which by the way featured the Skull as a returning villain? Was it all a Golden Age fluke?

Looking over the covers to the assortment of MLJ titles the Black Hood slugged through, one element jumps out. Whenever they could, MLJ splashed the Skull on the cover. Could that be it? Could 1940s readers have been snapping up anything with the Black Hood on it not because they really loved the hero, but because they thought the Skull was the coolest-looking super-villain they ever saw?

If that was so, what does that say about Captain America's popularity? Simon and Kirby abandoned the title after only a year, leaving art chores in the hands of a series of second-rate artists. Why did readers keep buying? Could it be they bought it just for the Red Skull? The mind boggles.

After a few more years, readers got tired of heroic guys in tights and masks versus nasty guys in skulls and hoods. Eventually, the first super-hero age petered out. In 1946, the Black Hood actually retired his costume, quit the force, and started the Black Hood Detective Agency as plain Kip Burland. It marked his last issue. After a couple *Pep* appearances as an un-costumed detective, he was toast. A similar semi-retirement closed out the career of the Shield.

MLJ had richer fish to fry. Their Archie Andrews book was selling the pants off super-heroes. They were the first major house to abandon super-heroes. Over the next few years, other companies dumped their heroes like fishermen casting aside junk fish.

But maybe things didn't have to turn out that way. Perhaps they just needed to tweak the formula a little. Instead of the Black Hood versus the Skull, or Captain America versus the Red Skull, what readers really wanted to see was an entirely different concept.

The Skull versus the Red Skull!

(Special thanks to Joe Carroll for his research assistance.)

Market Watch

[continued from page 32]

$75 US Buyer.

Of the books sold, the books going overseas are the ones we will miss the most, as they will be the most difficult to replace and will require more capital if the opportunity arises.

We continue to see the high grade books garner most of the interest, with CGC books achieving higher prices than raw books of equal grade. Lower grade books do well for us on eBay, if they are discounted sufficiently. Books from PR to VG and VF/NM to NM 9.2, 9.4, 9.6 and 9.8 dominate eBay, but what we see absent from eBay's market are the mid-grade books (FN to VF-) in any large numbers. For the casual reader, eBay is still the place to pick up that VG copy of your favorite title, cheaply!

Our recent acquisitions include a run of 1950s DCs including early *Strange Adventure*, *Mystery in Space*, *Sensation Mystery* and *Green Lanterns*. We weren't looking for these (we were Silver Age shopping at the time) but, when the opportunity arises, you learn to shift gears quickly. Actually, the purchase was more exciting for us as Silver Age can be found easily, but 1950 DCs don't pop up all that often. To each his own!

Al Stoltz

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No major shows done yet this year, so I guess a short report of some of the Lost Valley Pedigree collection would be an interesting read for some. We started actually selling the Lost Valley collection at San Diego Comic Con this past summer and overall it was a pretty good experience.

There were a few Gerber 10s and 9s in the collection and some books that I have never seen in my 30 years of digging around looking for comics. So, between San Diego and December, these are some of the books sold and prices realized for them: *Detective* #1 (6.0) $38,000, #5 6.5 $7,600, #10 8.5 $11,000, #14 3.5 $2,000, #27 $36,000; *Famous Funnies* #2 3.5 $1,400; *Action* #31 9.2 $4,000; *Classic Comics* #5 8.0 Variant $1,850; *Detective Picture Stories* #1 5.0 $2,000; *Feature Book* #39 Phantom $1,500; *More Fun* #9 3.5 $3,300; *Superman* #9 7.5 $1,700; *Wings* #90 9.0 $475.

We sold our *Wow What a Magazine* #1, 2, 3 for an amazing $17,000 for the trio, well above *Guide* and we now feel that was probably too cheap. *The New Adventure* #13 7.0 (a Gerber 10) sold in San Diego for $4,400 and then resold later that day for 50% more. *The Funny Pages* #6 7.0 sold in San Diego for $2,600 and has resold for an amazing $3,500. This just proves that these rare books are undervalued in the *Guide* and in constant demand.

We did a large cash/trade for the *Big Book of Comics* that was in outstanding condition. We recently sold over 2,000 Sunday newspaper sections that were also part of the Lost Valley collection for $11,000, proving that an interest outside mainstream comics may be growing. The Big Little Book collection that came out of this collection was sold in mass to an Ohio dealer and was in high grade.

This collection provided a rare chance to look at such a massing of vintage material and get an understanding of how underrated many of the titles are in both the collector world and in the *Guide*.

The last thing in this report I ask of the readers is a bit of help. I am looking for any information about a comic listed in the *Guide* titled *Mod Love* #1. Listed as made by Western Publishing in 1967, 50-cent and 36 pages. Anyone ever had a copy of this comic?

Doug Sulipa's Comic World

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We had a lull around Christmas time, but otherwise have been selling back issues like gangbusters. We have heard grumblings that the high end comics and CGC prices are weaker than normal, thus some are predicting Gloom, Doom and a Crash in the comics market. Our sales tell the opposite story, because unslabbed and affordable comics are as hot, if not hotter than ever. New buyers are finding our Website daily, and they find endless items to fill the holes in their collections. We can barely keep up with the demand on many titles.

Marvel Comics from 1970-1974 lead the pack, especially any and all key issues, in any grade. All 1970s horror comics, but especially Marvel and DC titles sold extremely well in the last two months. *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 and all early appearances of Punisher remain in huge demand and bring well over *Guide* in any grade. Everything related to Conan has been selling well. *Savage Sword of Conan* is suddenly back up in demand, with issues 200-235 being by far the most requested issues. Issue 235 is in very short supply and brought FN=$10 and VF=$15 each. The 1978-1990 New Story NON Robert E. Howard Mass Market Paperbacks of Conan are in big demand with most VFs at $8-12, but scarce titles at $15-$25.

With talk of a John Constantine movie, all the key issues of *Swamp Thing*, plus many Alan Moore items, have tripled in demand. *Miracleman* demand remains relentless for issue 11-24. We have sold a lot of 1980s UK items with Alan Moore. We sold several copies of the scarce Moore graphic novels, *Twisted Times* (FN $49) and *Shocking Futures* (FN $65).

Harvey comics remain one of our hottest sellers, only cooling slightly as stock continues to dwindle. Some of the high grade keys brought amazing prices at Heritage Auctions. The 1960s era was the most requested in the last two months, especially all squarebound issues. We sold over 1500 Harvey comics to a single customer, who wanted to rekindle old memories.

Dell comics, contrary to what some other dealers claim, are among our best sellers. Selection is the key to selling these. Currently many of the Four Color series are selling much better than normal—especially titles that had 1-5 issues in total. Good artist issues in particular are well up in demand, especially those by Toth and Manning. Dell westerns are moving well, but especially the Four Color issues. But the higher the grade, the slower they sell. FN/VF and NM- copies are hardest to move. The exception is the strict NM 9.4 and better key issues, which are much requested, but unfindable.

Weird SuspenStories remains in the news. These were hybrid Canadian variant editions of EC's *Crime SuspenStories* #1-3, published by Superior Comics in Canada, from 10-12/1951 in color. By law, "Crime" was not allowed in title of

Canadian comics; no copies known in better than FN. They are very rare with less than five copies of each known and *rarest* of all EC comics. As little as six years ago these sold for under $50 each. This week I can confirm the cash sale of an unslabbed set of #1-3 (approximate grades: #1 G/VG, #2, 3 FN) for US $6,500 for the set. Yet another record price in the field of rare Canadian comics.

Almost every week we get another want list for *Gothic Romances* (Atlas/Seaboard) #1, *Gothic Tales of Love* #1, 2, *Eerie* #1, 17, *Blazing Combat* #1, *Cerebus* #1 (1st), *TMNT* #1 (1st) and *Pussycat* (Marvel) #1. But we only find them at a rate of about one copy every one to two years. These will continue to climb steeply in the *Guide*, as even dealers cannot buy them for under 100-150% *Guide*.

Marvel and DC Treasury editions have been on the move again. In the last two to four months, we have had a lot of requests for high grade copies, which are typically quite scarce in strict VF or better. We managed to get a great selection from an awesome original owner collection in 9.0 to 9.4 and a few in 9.6. They sold quite well in the 120-200% *Guide* and up price range. The buyers were ecstatic when they arrived. It should be noted that most were only about VF/NM 9.0 average condition, brand new on day of release. To find a true 9.4 Treasury is quite a feat. Factor in storage problems, awkward size, lack of bags and backing boards and you get a formula for making high grades yet tougher. These are a collectible of the future to watch in "investment" grades.

National Lampoon mags are selling the best they have in many years. The most requested are #1-27 (1970-1972), and the High School Yearbook. But all the good artist issues (Frazetta, Adams, Barry Smith, Wrightson, etc.) move great in all grades too. We also got in original owner collection copies of many better issues and they are selling fast at high yet still affordable price levels. If you check out eBay, you will quickly see that 1973 and older issues in even FN or better are near nonexistent. The time to buy these gems is now.

Cool unlisted Marvel titles: *You Don't Say* (Marvel/Non-Pareil Pub. Corp., 1963; 100 pages including covers; B&W magazine with stiff covers) #NN (#1; full page photos with gags written by Stan Lee; includes: JFK, Nixon, Eisenhower, Castro, Marilyn Monroe, nudity and more; JFK, Nixon Photo-c); *More You Don't Say* (Marvel/Non-Pareil Pub. Corp., 1963; 100 pages including covers; B&W magazine with stiff covers) #NN (#2; full page photos with gags written by Stan Lee; includes: JFK, Nixon, Eisenhower, Castro, R. Burton, Liz Taylor, Queen Elizabeth, and more; JFK Photo-c).

Collector Ian Levine has lit up the CGC forum in his quest to get a complete set of all 30,000+ comics and related publications published by DC. He is about 40 regular comics away from having everything printed. *Dragonlance Annual* #1 (1990) and *Tales of the Teen Titans Annual* #5 (1987) are the only modern books he needs and they likely *do not exist* although listed for many years in Overstreet. He also needs about 100 of the scarcest of all DC giveaway comics. It is unknown if some giveaways even exist, such as *Flash Force* 2000 #1-5. *Superman Bradman Birthday Custom* (1988) lists for a mere $3 in Overstreet in the Promo comic section, but is perhaps one of the rarest of all DC comics. Only 25 copies were originally custom made for the Bradman family and only three copies are still known to exist. The actual value is closer to the $1000+ mark. The other ultra-rare DC giveaway is *Supergear* with perhaps five or less copies known to exist and so far only one graded by CGC. I have had buyers offer $500-$1000 for copies for over ten years now, beginning when it still only listed for $10 in the *Guide*. Ian's DC collection has most of the super-hero books, the truly tough books are titles like: *Buzzy* #34, 70; *Double Action* #1, 2; *Falling in Love* #69, 73, 79, 80; *Funny Stuff* #27, 36, 37; *Here's Howie* #7,17; *It's Gametime* #3; *Scribbly* #1, 6, 12, etc.

Bob Storms

High Grade Comics
914-237-6699
www.highgradecomics.com

The end of 2003 has come and gone and a new year begins! 2003 was a very interesting year as far as high grade goes. I have been very fortunate to have acquired a couple of collections and even more fortunate to have purchased a great number of #1s over the last couple of months. While my primary focus has always been high grade Silver/Bronze Age DCs and Marvels I once again started buying high grade Gold again. And basically had the same result as the last time—paid too much, make too little. Now I like Golden Age, I would love to buy it, but unless you are buying collections the limited purchase method doesn't work. Golden Age buyers, quite frankly, are much more tied to the *Guide* than the Silver Age collector universe. Unless you have a book everybody wants you are sometimes dealing with one or two buyers who won't come up to your price. And even though I do almost all the major shows I find that with the "Heritage Effect" of Golden Age auctions it seems that most collectors can find what they need and pay what they want.

Now the Silver/Bronze Age market is much different. Pre-'65 issues in high grade are still very strong in most of the titles. Silver Age sales of keys have been very strong. I've bought and sold a *Hulk* #1 CGC VF/NM 9.0, #1 CGC VF+ 8.5; *AF* #15 CGC 9.2; *X-Men* #1 8.5; *JIM* #83 9.0; *Avengers* #1 9.0; *FF* #1 7.5, #1 8.5.

Bronze Age sales are interesting, exciting and somewhat fickle. *Giant Size X-Men* #1s were dead for me most of the year, then I sold a couple. Same goes for *Hulk* #181 (yawn, another *Hulk* #181 plug). A 4000-book Bronze Age collection I purchased this year has yielded hundreds of CGC books, lots of 9.8s, 9.6s, 9.4s, etc. The latest batch of Marvel horror titles (*Tomb of Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Werewolf by Night*) have just been listed on my site. In addition I purchased a beautiful small batch (139 books) of original owner books—*Batman*, *Detective*, *Justice Leagues*, *Strange Tales* and *Thors*. Most of the collection graded out CGC 9.0 or better.

I look forward to the 2004 convention season and Wizard's March show.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

by Michelle Nolan

1941—Height of the Golden Age

The height of the Golden Age of comics—that defines 1941. Yet as wonderful as that year might have been in the comic books, the year was otherwise about as grim as they get in the real world.

Comic books had finally registered on the pulp culture radar by 1940, a monumental year when newsstand comic books doubled to 698 issues from their 1939 total of 322. Never again would the total of comic books more than double in one year. The total grew modestly to 832 issues in 1941.

Yet by 1941, dozens of serious-minded adult critics of all sorts—ranging from librarians to newspaper columnists and children's book authors—had begun to assail the so-called "funny books" for not being very funny. And you know something? Those critics were essentially correct in that important respect, even though their shrill cries for reform seem antiquated today.

The times, of course, didn't really call for commercial comic books that were funny. With war rapidly spreading throughout most of Europe and much of Asia in 1940 and 1941, the commercial success of comic books hinged largely on heroic tales of intense conflict.

By the end of 1941, virtually all of the icons of the Golden Age had been created. Notwithstanding the explosion of creativity gradually spurred by DC and Marvel in the Silver Age years of 1956-64, never again would so many memorable characters be created in such a short period as occurred in 1938-41.

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, halted most of the original creativity in the comics, though not their sales or production totals (the number of issues produced continued to go up every year throughout the 1940s, notwithstanding paper restrictions). But by the time the United States entered World War II, the issues on the stands had early 1942 dates. And there is no question the outbreak of war had a serious impact on comic book production—the 1942 total was 947 issues, an increase of only 115 issues.

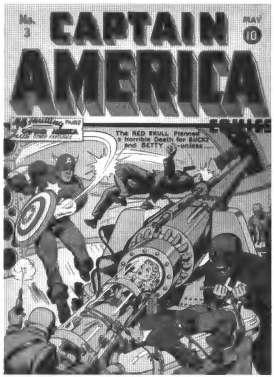
The 832 newsstand comics produced with 1941 dates, however, were more than the entire total of 813 issues published during the early history of comic books in 1934-39, when the vast majority was comic strip reprints. By 1941, though, it had become apparent that newspaper reprints would never again dominate the commercial comic book scene.

The reprint anthologies totaled only 106 issues in 1941, or 13 percent of the comic books, and some of the strips in some of these comics were original as well. Most of these comics—*Ace, Comics on Parade*, *Crackajack*, *Famous Funnies*, *The Funnies*, *Magic*, *Popular*, *Sparkler*, *Super* and *Tip Top*—would remain more or less commercially viable during the entire decade.

These, of course, were what most folks originally thought about when, more often that not, they dubbed comic books "funny books" during the 1930s, even though even then many of the stories in the reprint anthologies dealt with action and adventure. The expression was directly lifted from the popular phrase "the funny pages."

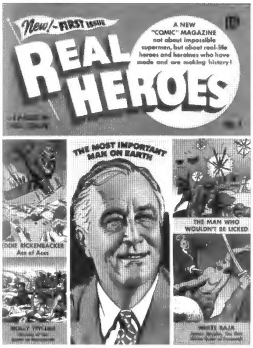
As far as humor goes, though, precious few true "funny books" appeared on 1941 newsstands. There were also a few other comics in 1941 with newspaper reprints, such as *Mutt and Jeff* #3 and 4, the only two issues of the classic pair released that year.

The rest of the humor titles, though, make up a shockingly short list indeed for 1941—*Animal Comics* #1, *Looney Tunes* #1-3, and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #4-15, all from Dell. There were also a few humor issues in the series of David McKay *Feature Books*



(*Blondie* in #27-29), Dell *Four Colors* (*Walt Disney's Reluctant Dragon* #13, *Mickey Mouse* #16, *Dumbo* #17, *Jiggs and Maggie* #18 and *Barney Google* #19), along with a few in Dell's *Large Feature Books* series. That was it for humor, though. Costume heroes and other fantastic high-adventure characters, in fact, consumed close to 80 percent of all comic books in 1941.

Other than the reprint and humor titles listed above, the only other non-fantastic hero comics in 1941 were led by several "real life" comic books inspired by the debut of *True Comics* from George Hecht's Parents' Magazine Publishers. *True Comics* #1-7 appeared in 1941 along with Hecht's own *Calling*


New!–FIRST ISSUE
A NEW "COMIC" MAGAZINE not about impossible supermen, but about real-life heroes and heroines who have made real one making history!
REAL HEROES
THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN ON EARTH
THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T BE LICKED
EDDIE RICKENBACKER Ace of Aces
WHITE SAJA

All Girls #1-2 and *Real Heroes* #1-2 plus Standard's *Real Life* #1-2; Street and Smith's *Sport Comics* #2-4, *Pioneer Picture Stories* #1 and *Trail Blazers* #1; and Centaur's *World Famous Heroes* #1-2. There were many more "real life" types to come.

As for the other non-fantastic hero titles, the 1941 list includes *Army and Navy* #1-3, *Big Chief Wahoo* #1, *Classic Comics* #1-2, *Dickie Dare* #1-2, *Gene Autry* #1, *Red Ryder* #3-5, *War Comics* #4, and the Dell one-shot *USA Is Ready*.

In all, there were only 181 comics with 1941 dates—an average of just 15 per month!—that were not primarily oriented to fantastic adventure (thanks to Dan Stevenson's amazing database for helping me with these numbers). It's no wonder that by 1941, many educators had become concerned with the hundreds of violent fantasies expressed in comics month after month.

Even so, these huge 10¢, 68-page beauties—there were no less than 651 comics exploding with fantastic feats—sold like crazy. I haven't counted the total number of costume heroes appearing in these comics in 1941, but it's well over 300 characters!

Considering that none of these characters even existed in comic books only four years earlier, it represented a phenomenal shift in American pop culture for children.

Time out—I just took a quick count of costume heroes appearing in 1941, using a now-classic index so handsomely produced by Jerry Bails and Howard Keltner in 1969. The total for 1941 was, indeed, well over 300 costumed characters! That's not surprising, when you figure that those 651 comics filled with fantastic adventure contained well over 3000 stories.

At any rate, now you can see the incredible change that came over the "funny books" so quickly.

Among the multitude of heroes created in 1941 comics were three of the best-known names in the history of American popular fiction—Wonder Woman, Captain America and Archie—not to mention such comic-book icons as the Blackhawks, Captain Marvel Junior, Green Arrow and Aquaman.

Captain America became the first costumed character ever to succeed in his own comic book without appearing first in an anthology title. The operative word is "succeed," since there were earlier such title-character debuts. Cap's debut in *Captain America* #1 (March 1941)—supposedly as Timely publisher Martin Goodman's answer to MLJ's The Shield—hit the stands nearly a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Cap seemed like a fabulous character for his times right from the start, bolstered as he was by the frenetic energy of Simon and Kirby's story and art. To be sure, it was Captain America, not The Shield, who inspired the burst of star-spangled heroes to follow. I can't help wondering, though, why issues of *Captain America* seem so scarce today compared to the likes of Superman, Batman and Captain Marvel.

Captain America surely must have sold at least half as well as those other icons, yet it seems as though only one issue of *Captain America* is available for every dozen or so of the other icons. To me, this is one of the great mysteries in comics history.

It's also worth noting that Captain America outlasted The Shield by nearly two years, although both characters struggled for commercial success in the years following World War II. The Golden Age Cap last appeared in *Captain America* #74 (Oct 1949). The Shield bowed out in *Pep* #65 (Jan 1948), with an explanation in *Pep* #66 that The Shield's G-Man Club had become The Archie Club. There was no explanation in *Captain America's Weird Tales* #75 why there was no Cap.

As for Archie and Wonder Woman—who could have guessed? Both characters debuted as short, back-of-the-book features in issues dated December 1941—*All-Star* #8 (Dec 1941/Jan 1942) and *Pep* #22 (Dec 1941).

Sometimes I can't help wondering if anyone who read these two stories—both of which have been reprinted in books—had the slightest inkling of how meaningful these characters would become in American pop culture. It's intriguing to note that within one year, both had been launched in comic books of their own—titles that continue to this day.

The most important—and most collectable—first issues appearing in 1941 included *All-Flash*, *All Winners*, *Captain America*, *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Classic Comics* (later *Classics Illustrated*), *Green Lantern*, *Looney Tunes*, *Military Comics* (later *Modern Comics*), *Star Spangled*, *Sub-Mariner* and *World's Best Comics* (which became *World's Finest Comics* with #2). There were, of course, many other first issues.

One of the most underrated of all Golden Age first issues is *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies*, which featured the first comic book appearances of four Warner Brothers cartoon favorites—Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and Porky Pig. I dearly wish I had bought one of these in those wonderful years of the 1960s or '70s, when first issues were affordable!

Book Review

by Paul Gravett

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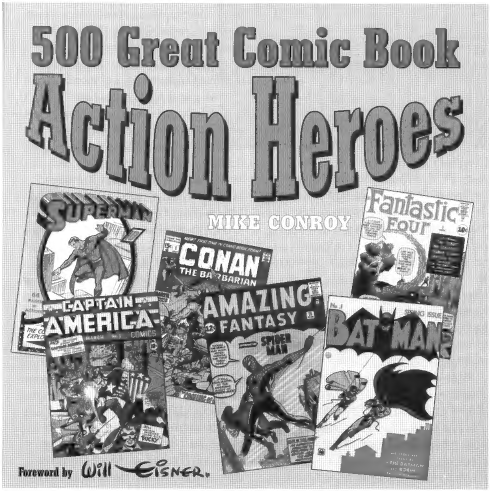
500 GREAT COMIC BOOK ACTION HEROES, by Mike Conroy (U.S. edition, 2003: Barron's) $18.97 ISBN 0-7641-2581-8

Right away, let me confess my involvement in this book, as I wrote two of the essays, on the Comics Code and manga. I've known writer and comics expert Mike Conroy since the Seventies and my earliest contacts with British comics fandom. Mike had a bit of help on this book from me and others, but he deserves full credit for compiling this chunky reference tome, totaling 376 pages and 7 inches square. Its title might lead you to expect a long list of character entries, major and minor, and those are here. An A to Z of male heroes fills more than half the book, followed by the same for female heroes, teams, newspaper heroes, war heroes, western heroes and sci-fi heroes.

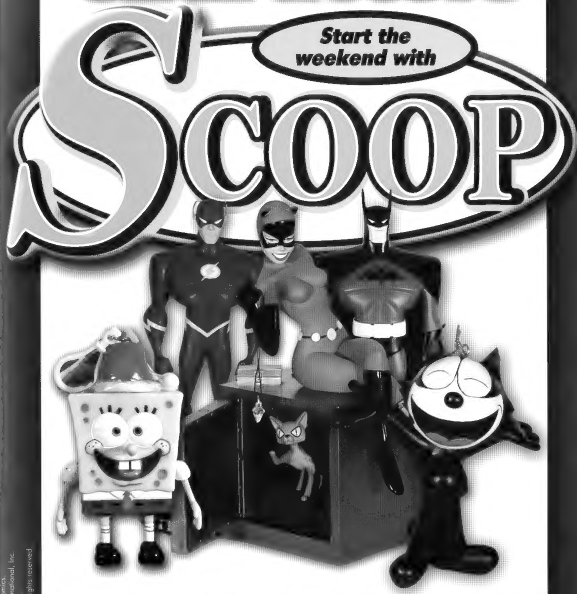
But there's much more besides. What lifts this book are the clear, concise 32-page introductory history of 20th century newsstand comics and 59 well-written, insightful essays on a variety of characters, genres and issues, such as creators' rights, sidekicks, horror comics, British adventure weeklies or the Italian fumetti *Diabolik* and *Tex*. Though heavily geared towards American comic books, there is a healthy coverage of major British stars like Dan Dare and Judge Dredd, betraying its origins as a British book published in 2002.

I feel the book is let down somewhat by poor graphic design. The American cover is pedestrian when compared to the striking John Watson super-hero painting on the British edition. More of a problem is created by the same yellow-orange background which runs through the book. With no other colors or signage to distinguish sections, this uniform color makes it confusing to follow the alphabetical listings, especially when they are interrupted by the articles. As for these, there are some well-chosen covers and extracts, but the majority of the entries have no accompanying illustration. And worst of all, there is no index, no easy way to cross reference an artist or find a visual of a character, vital for any reference work. Apparently Mike really wanted one included but the publisher vetoed it; I am assured that the next book in this British series, on underground comics, will be indexed.

Though it works less well as a practical guide and tool, this volume accomplishes the task of covering a lot of territory in compact and entertaining fashion. It would be hard to beat as an affordable basic primer for anyone curious about the major heroes and heroines of comics and the men and women behind them.



Start the weekend with all your favorite characters



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